

“THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC”: THE CAPE TOWN MILITARY TATTOO 2012

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Insert: The Pipe Bands of Cape Field Artillery, the SA Military Health Service, 1 Medical Battalion Group, and the Cape Town Highlanders.

Background: The final muster of all the participants in the Cape Town Military Tattoo 2012.

As the pipers and drummers, attired in their distinctive tartan kilts, sporrans and glengarries, exited the main arena through the Kat archway with its wooden block cobbles, the echoes of the wailing bagpipes, the thumping bass drums and the rattling tenor drums gradually died away.

For one brief moment, silence fell.

It marked the end of the Cape Town Military Tattoo of 2012, which had run at the *Castle of Good Hope* from Wednesday, 31 October until Saturday, 3 November 2012. The crowd of over a thousand spectators who attended the spectacular final night's performance in perfect weather conditions reluctantly filed out through the spike-studded doors of the Van der Stel Gate. Some cast one last look back at the arena, which was still bathed in bright light. No doubt, the memories of this dazzling finale would linger for a long time.

The theme for this year's tattoo was “**A Tribute to the Military Musicians**”, with homage being paid to the men and women of the military who support the services with their music.

Bandsmen – particularly drummers and trumpeters – have always been part of the military. In the history of the Cape garrison, they were responsible for transmitting and relaying calls in the field, acting as a communication system, warning the garrison of danger, and notifying the soldiers of parades. The nightly drummer on the Leerdam bastion of the Castle was tasked with recalling off-duty soldiers to their barracks at sunset, by ordering tavern-keepers to “*Doe den tap toe*”





Insert: A trumpeter and a drummer of the Historisch Tamboerkorps der Koninklijke Marechaussee give the audience a glimpse of Dutch military history.



Background: The massed military bands of the SA Army Bands Cape Town and Koonstad, the SA Military Health Service Band and the combined Botswana Army Band form up to spell out the word "MUSIC" – the theme of the Cape Town Military Tattoo 2012.

(Close the taps on your beer-barrels). This ritual had originated in the Low Countries during the 80 Years' War in the 16th and 17th centuries. As the Dutch settlers were the first occupants of the Castle subsequent to 1652, it was adopted at the Cape too. Over the years, this nightly ritual evolved into an elaborate military musical spectacle known as a "tattoo".

At the start of each Cape Town Military Tattoo, the locking of the massive Van der Stel Gate by the Castle Ceremonial Guard recalls the early military history of the Castle, when it was first constructed between 1666 and 1679. At that time, the Cape was a replenishment station for ships travelling to and from the Far East, falling under the control of the Dutch East India Company (Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie or VOC). This makes it the oldest surviving colonial building in the country and the only building to have had a continuous military presence for almost 350 years.

At nightfall, the night-guard commander (the role played by Master Warrant Officer Alfie Wort of the Cape Town Highlanders) would receive permission from the Castle adjutant (Captain Francois Morkel) to lock and secure the Castle. Once the night-guards, with their tall halberds gleaming in the light, had locked the gates, their commander would bring the large key to the adjutant for safe-keeping until daybreak.

The Castle commander would on occasion call up local burghers to augment the standing garrison.

The musketeers of the Cape Town Muzzle Loaders Association, dressed in the period costume of early Dutch militiamen, thus appeared on the ornate Kat balcony. Their weapons are smoothbore long-arms dating back to the 17th and 18th centuries. The gunpowder is poured into the barrel from the front, before being wadded in tightly, and then discharged. The men of the *Cannon Association of South Africa* fired two 2-pounder ship's cannons that are more than 200 years old.

Later during the show, Tchaikovsky's famous 1812 Overture demonstrated how skilfully and dramatically the sound of gunfire can be incorporated into the musical score. As the music built to a climax, the thunderous firing of the four 25-pounder guns by the Saluting Troop of Cape Field Artillery echoed from the massive Castle walls, with the sound reverberating all around the arena. The 1812 Overture demands the precise synchronisation of the music and the saluting guns, a challenging task that has been assigned to fire control officer Staff Sergeant Andrew Imrie and Battery Sergeant Major Master Warrant Officer Bennie Havenga. It is no wonder that this musical piece has become the signature act of the Cape Town Military Tattoo!

International participants from the Netherlands – *Het Historisch Tamboerkorps der Koninklijke Marechaussee* (the Historical Drum Corps of the Royal Dutch Military Police) – gave audiences a brief glimpse into Dutch military history.



The conductor and drum major of this volunteer band is Warrant Officer Class 1 (Retired) Jan van Lienden. The chairman of the band is Captain (Retired) Coos Pieters who commanded the Trompetterkorps of the Koninklijke Marechaussee, which participated in the Cape Town Military Tattoo 2009. The two-tone blue uniforms of the Historical Drum Corps, with their high collars and elaborate white shoulder knots, closely resembled those worn in 1954. Their band consisted of drummers – playing the side drum used by infantry regiments – and trumpeters – blowing the traditional cavalry trumpet or bugle, which is used to signal the charge of Regiments of Horse into battle.

Initially, there were two categories of military musicians: infantry drummers and cavalry trumpeters were enlisted soldiers, whereas various other musicians were hired privately by regiments to perform at balls, dances and concerts. Nowadays, however, military musicians are expected to perform all types of music and at a large range of events.

The fact that bandsmen are often trained soldiers, who serve alongside their comrades both in peacetime and in war, was illustrated by an exciting new act in the Cape Town Military Tattoo 2012: a Mortar Run. Two teams were drawn from the Cape Town Highlanders, and one team from Cape Field Artillery, all wearing battle dress and their *staaldakke* or protective helmets. They were assisted by three band members from the SA Army Band Cape Town, resplendent in their chilli-red tunics.

Under the control of Corporal Cox, the three teams were required to execute deployment and firing drills for the 81 mm mortar, a patrol and base weapon that is capable of firing high explosive, smoke screen and illumination bombs. It can be handled by a team of four persons. It consists of a base plate assembly, a barrel assembly and a mount assembly. The full mortar, incidentally, weighs just on 15 kg – and

each bomb around 1.8 kg – and due to its short range, it is usually deployed fairly close to the objective and thus under enemy fire. Strength – and speed – are clearly essential.

The use of the drums to issue commands to the soldiers was vividly illustrated by the SA Navy's Silent Drill Squad, which had starred in the Cape Town Military Tattoo 2009. Their precision drill movements were all controlled entirely by the beat of the drum, with no word of command being spoken. Trained by Warrant Officer Class 2 Carl Daniels and Warrant Officer Class 2 Nolan Herne, the members of the Squad rehearse after hours and between their daily duties at the naval base and aboard ship. Smartly clad in black and white uniforms, they marched, swung their arms and twirled their rifles in perfect sync with each other. Their sterling performance was deservedly greeted with enthusiastic cheers and applause. It is not only drums and trumpets that are commonly played in military bands: Bagpipers too have a long and glorious history of leading soldiers into battle.

A most memorable example of this was *Piper Bill Millin* who played the pipes whilst his commando brigade was under fire during the D-Day landing in Normandy. He continued playing, as they advanced from Sword Beach to Pegasus Bridge, and – miraculously – survived, while his comrades fell around him. When Millin later talked to German snipers about the event, they claimed they did not shoot him because they thought he was crazy, calling him "*Der verrückte Dudelsackpfeifer*" (or "the mad piper").

Anyone who has experienced the arrival of a pipe band can attest to the mighty power this music carries: the stirring sound of the pipes can inspire troops to charge into battle, while striking terror into the hearts of the enemy.

The following pipe bands participated in the Cape Town Military Tattoo 2012: the Drums and Pipes of the Cape Town Highlanders, wear-



Background: Silhouetted against the cityscape, the Lone Piper (Pipe Major Bradley Boxall of 1 Med Bn Gp) plays his mournful tune.



Insert: Drummers and trumpeters of the Historisch Tamboerkorps der Koninklijke Marechaussee.



ing their Gordon tartan and green jackets, under Pipe Major Charles Canning; the Pipes and Drums of Cape Field Artillery, dressed in the red Stuart tartan, under Pipe Major Andrew Imrie; the Pipes and Drums of 1 Medical Battalion Group from Durban, attired in the McKenzie tartan and maroon glengarries, under Pipe Major Bradley Boxall; and the Pipes and Drums of the South African Medical Health Services from Pretoria, in plain red kilts, under Pipe Major Liam O'Flaherty. The bagpipes are not only effective in inspiring soldiers to charge into battle, but also in lamenting the loss of those who have given their lives and passed on to higher service. The mournful solitary wail of the lone piper on the roof above the arena at the end of the evening is an unforgettably moving sound.

“Military musicians often marched into battle with the regimental colours as a visible and audible rallying point amid the noise and confusion of war,” explained Captain John Manning, a serving Officer at the Cape Town Rifles (Dukes), the well-spoken announcer of the Tattoo, as the massed military bands of the Cape Town Military Tattoo

2012 marched into the main arena: The SA Army Band Cape Town, wearing their chilli-red tunics, under the command of Drum Major Warrant Officer Class 2 André van Schalkwyk; the SA Army Band Kroonstad in their khaki uniforms, under Drum Major Staff Sergeant Johan Labuschagne; the SA Military Health Services Band from Pretoria, led by Drum Major Staff Sergeant Mashiya. They were accompanied by visiting bandsmen from the Botswana Army Band and from Brazzaville (Congo) in their dark-green camouflage uniforms, who were joined by musicians from the SA Army Band Cape Town, the SA Air Force and the SA Army's MSDS programme during their act.

In addition to the above experienced military and pipe bands, the Cape Town Military Tattoo also engages in developing the younger generation of musicians, by offering them a unique opportunity to be part of this exciting event.

Thus, spectators who arrived at the Castle before 20h00 were entertained by two groups of talented young musicians: The first were the 10 to 13 year-old girls



Insert: One of the teams in the Mortar Run efficiently sets up the 81mm mortar..

Background: The final salvo of Cape Field Artillery's four GV1 25-pounder guns during the 1812 Overture, the signature piece of the Cape Town Military Tattoo.



and boys from the *Westcott Primary School Instrumental Group* from Diep River.

They wove their gentle spells with soprano and treble recorders, Orff xylophones, glockenspiels and Djembe drums, under conductor Maya Maile, who is herself an accomplished cellist of the respected Beau Soleil Music Centre. Jill Scheepers, who founded the band some five years ago, has written several arrangements especially for the band: some traditional African songs, a selection of popular ballads and hits from musicals, and a Cape medley. The youngsters also formed the silent guard for the arrival of the functionary just before the 20h00 start of the show.

The second, slightly older group was the *Senior Steel Band from Wynberg Boys' High School*, who had performed at last year's Military Sunset Concert at the Castle. The steel band was introduced at the school in 2001 under the management and direction of Peter Catzave-

los. Since then, it has become so popular with the boys at the school, that there are now three groups – senior, intermediate and junior levels.

Their current teacher is ex-pupil Keenan Oliphant, who learnt to play the drums whilst at school; he is currently completing a degree in music and drama. He does all the arrangements himself, adding contemporary music to the old favourites, and writing new pieces for the bands too. They performed on provincial tours from 2004 to 2007, and at the Grahamstown Arts Festival in 2009.

Another popular program item was the lovely long-legged lasses of the Celtic Dance Tapestry and the Claddagh Studio, who are trained by Taryn Harkness. They displayed exceptionally nimble footwork with their hard shoe and soft shoe dancing sequences on the stage in front of the illuminated Kat balcony. The tapping of their hard dancing shoes was amplified dramatically by the microphones set up all around the stage by the technicians of 3 Electronic Work Shop.



The feedback from the spectators and the invited guests after the show was extremely positive. They expressed their delight at the quality of the production: "Very elegant and graceful. Music wonderful" (Prof A. Slabbert, Cape Peninsula University of Technology). "Honoured to share a wonderful evening of music by soldiers!!" (Franklin and Joan Sonn, guests of Brigadier General B.C. Gildenhuys, GOC of the SA Army Armour Formation). "A wonderful evening most professionally conducted" (Rear Admiral R.W. Higgs, Chief of Naval Staff). "Excellent military tattoo. Actually the only military tattoo. Thoroughly enjoyed it" (Major General L.C. Ford, SAMHS). "Very nice evening and an excellent show. Thanks for the 'Cape' hospitality" (Brigadier General A. Fredericks, SA Army Training Formation).

The theme of the Cape Town Military Tattoo 2012, viz. *a tribute to the military musicians*, was perfectly encapsulated in the well-known ABBA song, "**Thank you for the Music**". As the soloist, Corporal Godfrey Rahube of the SA Army Band Cape Town, began to sing, the massed military bands changed formation, until they had shaped the letters of the word MUSIC.

*"So I say
Thank you for the music, the songs I'm
singing
Thanks for all the joy they're bringing;
Who can live without it, I ask in all honesty
What would life be?
Without a song or a dance, what are we?
So I say thank you for the music
For giving it to me..."*

Indeed, thank you for the music!

The audience's departure at the end of the final performance of the Cape Town Military Tattoo 2012 marked the culmination of months of hard work, dedication and sacrifice by hundreds of performers, musicians, technicians, artisans and organisers. Without excellent coordination

and teamwork, this magical musical spectacle would not have taken place. Many of the performers had travelled long distances – from the Netherlands, from Congo-Brazzaville and from Botswana, as well as from Pretoria, Durban and Kroonstad, to participate.

But let us not forget to thank all the people working behind the scenes to coordinate the multi-faceted aspects of staging a successful Tattoo: erecting the seating stands, setting up the lighting and the audio-visual equipment, supplying communications equipment, providing catering and hospitality services, welcoming spectators and ushering them to their seats, ensuring the safety and security of everyone at the Castle, maintaining the premises and keeping the facilities clean, coordinating rehearsals, ensuring logistic support, promoting and advertising the event... The list is endless.

Many of the individuals and groups – not only the part-time soldiers of the SANDF Reserve Force, but also those employed full-time, whether as soldiers or civilians – freely and voluntarily contributed their time, resources, skills and experience. They did so after hours or on leave from their civilian employ, sacrificing time that could otherwise have been spent with their families or friends. Their generosity, dedication and passion are what make the Cape Town Military Tattoo such an exciting and unforgettable event for everyone involved.

Until we all meet again in the first week of November at the Cape Town Military Tattoo 2013!

DVDs of the Cape Town Military Tattoo of 2009 and 2010 are available at R80.00 each; a double pack of the 2009 and 2010 DVDs costs R140.00 each. The 2012 DVD can be pre-ordered at R100.00 each; enquiries for pre-orders – tel: (021) 787 1162/1167/1198 or email: defencereserveswc@gmail.com or johan.conradie@dod.mil.za. 

