



# Entertainment

Keely Wygonik editor/953-2105

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(O&E)

## Upbeat Concert band is entertaining

By Keely Wygonik  
staff writer

**I**F SOMEONE asked him what his theme song was, Steven Woloson of Troy, who conducts the Heritage Concert Band, might whistle "Let Me Entertain You."

"We are there to entertain," said Woloson. "The TV is offering such an entertainment challenge. To compete, we have to offer something. We're more than stuffed shirts playing concert band music."

From 3-5 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 1, the band will play in Hamtramck at the Labor Day Festival. The concert will be at the Hamtramck Senior Citizens' Plaza, 2620 Holbrook, at Jos. Campau.

Concerts begin with the audience singing "Star Spangled Banner" accompanied by the 52-piece band. During "Take Me out to the Ballgame," they yell then it's "One, two, three strikes you're out at the old ballgame."

FOR "Hi Neighbor," some of the musicians put down their instruments and sing. When the song ends, everyone stands up, tips their caps and greets the audience with an enthusiastic "hi."

During a "Testimonial to Liberty," a band member reads excerpts from the Declaration of Independence and the Gettysburg Address, while the band plays patriotic songs.

Ballroom dancers Belle Kukurka and Ron Sherman of Dearborn Heights add another dimension to concerts, dancing the samba to a Latin American tune.

"We've been dancing together for eight years," said Belle of her partner Ron. "We met Steve, and he asked us if we would dance at the concerts. We said sure. We've won lots of ballroom dancing contests throughout the metropolitan Detroit area. We enjoy it."

**WOLOSON'S DAUGHTERS**, Maria, Gloria, and Susan, Sept. 1, the band, and his wife, Ines is the music librarian.

The youngest member is drum soloist, 7-year-old Thaddeus Dixon of Detroit. The oldest is 88-year-old Tony Mastrantonio of Clarkston who plays clarinet.

Dixon isn't the first young musician to play in the band. Dennis Carter of Hamtramck, who plays flute, joined when he was in seventh grade. Last year, he won first place in WQRS "Classics in the Making" competition. In June he graduated from Hamtramck High School, and will be attending college this fall.

"The band has people from all walks of life," said Frank Lozano of Livonia. "All the people have this energy. It's a tremendous outlet. It helps you stay healthy." Most of the musicians played in high school and college bands and orchestras. About 35 are professional musicians, and eight including Lozano have their own bands or small combos.



Steven Woloson conducts the 52-member Heritage Concert Band as they play "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" at the Livonia City Hall Plaza.

Recently retired as a principal with the Detroit School System, Lozano has been a band member for about eight years.

"I REALLY like working with the group. It's a community effort. We get a chance to unwind, and are able to help other musicians. I've always been an educator, I like to help educate people. We do that by helping each other, and by playing a variety of music at our concerts."

The band's repertoire spans the world — Polish, Italian, German, Ukrainian, Irish and Spanish.

Founded in 1955 as the B Sharp Music Club, the band was reorganized in May 1984 by Woloson and 14 musicians into the Hamtramck Concert Band.

"Then we were asked to play at the Italian American Festival at Hart Plaza," said Woloson.

On Sept. 19, 1987, the band played for Pope John Paul II when he visited Hamtramck.

"Frank Lozano, one of our members was the principal of Webster

Elementary School in a Hispanic neighborhood of Detroit and wanted us to play a concert at his school. We added some Spanish numbers."

Because of the diversity, the band started being known as the Hamtramck Heritage Concert Band.

"Then, we got down to only two band members living in Hamtramck, so we evolved into the Heritage Concert Band," said Woloson.

"We're making a big effort to be an 'all-type' band." "We play all kinds of music, ethnic, pop, jazz."

## Young drummer is on a roll

By Keely Wygonik  
staff writer

During the concert at Livonia Mall, Thaddeus Dixon squirms in his seat and fidgets just like any 7-year-old who would rather be outside playing on a sunny Sunday afternoon.

But when Heritage Concert Band conductor Steven Woloson turns to the audience and says, "and now I'd like you to meet our guest soloist..." Thaddeus snaps to attention.

He walks to his drum set, nods to Woloson and steals the show as he plays the percussion solo, "High Hat" by Paul Yoder, accompanied by the 52-member band.

"The thing that's really puzzling," said his father, Gus, "is he doesn't seem ready, but when the time comes to play, he takes care of business."

**DIXON IS extraordinary.** In Novl, he beat drummers age 16 and younger, to win the 1990-91 regional in a

contest sponsored by the American Guild of Music. Then he won the 1991 national competition in Chicago.

He takes his music seriously and already has the makings of a pro. During a recent performance at the Troy Historical Museum, Thaddeus dropped a drum stick. He didn't miss a beat and continued tapping with one stick while reaching for another he kept close at hand.

"I don't know where he learned that," said his former teacher, Nick Dombrowski. Dombrowski plays clarinet in the Heritage Concert Band. "A lot of kids would have quit and started crying."

Thaddeus has a knack for music. His parents noticed it when he was 2.

"His grandmother found a beat-up bongo drum at a garage sale. He never put it down," said Gus. "It fell to pieces."

"THEN WE went to Toys 'R' Us and bought him a drum set. He kept playing it. We thought he was serious and bought him a professional drum set. By then his toy set was held together with tape."



The Heritage Dancers, Ron Sherman and Belle Kukurka dance the samba while the Heritage Concert Band plays "Brazil" in Livonia.



Thaddeus Dixon plays his solo, accompanied by the Heritage Concert Band, July 28 at Livonia Mall.

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