

Birmingham Concert Band celebrates 25th year

BY KEELY KALESKI
STAFF WRITER

John Reddy, his wife Joan, and their children were standing on the corner watching the Bicentennial Parade in downtown Birmingham when the thought occurred to him - "Why doesn't Birmingham have a band?"

He called some of his friends in the business community, and "Harris Machus took the ball and ran with it," said Reddy, a Birmingham resident who retired from the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers as vice president of editorial in 1999. "We hired a band director and organized a band."

The Birmingham Concert Band was established in 1977 mostly by word of mouth. Dave Falvey of Bloomfield Township, one of the original members, got a call from Reddy.

"I had my own dance band, and John said 'how'd you like to help us organize a band?' I knew musicians who knew musicians and that's how we got started."

The band, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, has a roster of over 100 members ranging in age from high school to senior citizen. Its opening performance, "Sonic Spectacular," 3 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 20 at Seaholm High School, features tuba soloist Neal Campbell, playing *Concerto for Tuba*.

"I love it," said Falvey who plays trombone, "the discipline, paying attention to what's on the page, and playing it right. We have a wonderful conductor, Grant Hoemke, he's really teaching us. I just love to play."

The Birmingham Concert Band is composed of people like Falvey who played professionally, and others who played in high school and college bands. Skill levels vary. Some



The Birmingham Concert Band is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. The band is directed by Grant Hoemke.

members have played for many years, others are just renewing an acquaintance with their instrument.

"There are a lot of people who have experience in high school and college musical activities and need an outlet," said Reddy. "When they get together and perform the community appreciation, I heard them perform last year and thought they sounded pretty sharp."

Membership in the band is open to anyone. There are no try-outs or formal performance requirements. Members of certain sections of the band sometimes take turns playing first parts on different selections. It's left up to the individual to find his place in the section, with input from the band director. Band members rehearse 7:30-9:30 p.m. every Wednesday at Seaholm High School.

In addition to the band, some members play in the Straw Hat Band, a group of 15 musicians who perform for a minimum fee for senior groups, nursing homes, com-

SONIC SPECTACULAR

What: Birmingham Concert Band performance featuring tuba soloist Neal Campbell
When: 3 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 20
Where: Seaholm High School auditorium, corner of Lincoln and Cranbrook, Birmingham

Admission: No charge, but donations to the band's scholarship fund are encouraged
Information: Call (248) 474-4997 or (248) 647-7586 or visit www.birminghamconcertband.com

SEASON SCHEDULE

■ Festive Adorations: A Holiday Celebration - 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 8, Lutheran Church of the Redeemer, 1800 W. Maple, Birmingham
■ Two for One, the Birmingham Concert Band and Farmington Community Band perform individually and together, led by guest con-

ductor Jack Williamson - 3 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 19, Farmington Harrison High School Auditorium, 29995 W. 12 Mile, between Middlebelt and Orchard Lake Roads, Farmington Hills

■ Isn't It Romantic: A Cabaret Concert - 3 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 16, Berkshire Middle School Cafeteria on west 14 Mile between Lahser and Cranbrook

■ A Cause for Celebration, 25th anniversary concert - 3 p.m. Sunday, May 4, Groves High School Auditorium, 20500 W. 13 Mile, Birmingham

■ Straw Hat Band - Call Dave Falvey, (248) 362-3303 for information

■ Windsong Clarinet Ensemble - Call Tom Smith, (248) 656-2381 or visit www.windsongclarins.com

clarinet ensemble performs on request for a minimum fee.

There are lots of reasons people join the band.

"You're giving of yourself to entertain other people," said Falvey. "Making music is relaxing, and you create a lot of new friendships."

The Oct. 20 concert will feature a variety of works. Campbell is Tuba Artist in Residence for Custom Music Company and an instructor at Wayne State University. He performs with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, Birmingham-Bloomfield Symphony Orchestra, Windsor Brass Quintet, Metropolitan Brass Ensemble and River City Brass Band. He attended Millikin University, Indiana University and the University of Michigan.

Hoemke has been music director and conductor of the Birmingham Concert Band since 1980. A graduate of Wayne State University, he has taught instrumental music at all levels for over 25 years and currently teaches in the Farmington Public Schools.

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munity events and private events. Proceeds go into the

band's scholarship fund. Last year the band awarded six student scholarships to Interlochen.

New this year is the Windsong Clarinet Ensemble, composed of 15 clarinetists. Like the Straw Hat Band, the

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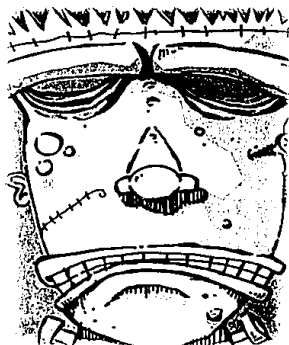


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including Marshall Fields. Charge by phone 248.645.6666

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