

THE BLACKSBURG
COMMUNITY BAND

The Score

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From the President

Hello Band,

The band is off to a great start for 2012. We have had six new members and three returning members join the band since the start of the New Year. The spring concert is quickly approaching and is providing a great opportunity to play fun, unique, and challenging pieces. As daylight grows longer and temperatures warm it is easy to think that spring has already arrived. After the spring concert the band will transition into preparation for the outdoor late spring/summer concerts. Those concerts are a great chance for the band to bring people together to relax, listen to music, and enjoy the (hopefully) nice weather.

The band is always searching for new or returning members. If you know of friends, acquaintances, or past members who would enjoy playing with the band please invite them to join the band. It is a great opportunity for anyone, regardless of experience, who enjoys making music to have fun, contribute to the community, and make new friends.

I wanted to thank everyone who has Kroger Cards for using and reloading them. The cards provide a great funding stream for the band, 5 percent of purchases. As Debby recently reported for the month of January the band reloaded the cards with over \$8,200 which provided the band with \$400 in revenue. From January 2011 to January 2012 the band has received \$3,586 from the use of the Kroger cards. The revenue generated assists the band in purchases of music and equipment, as well as, operating expenses such as venue rental, storage space rental, and insurance.

Warm regards,

Jennifer

Spring concert—April 15

The Blacksburg Community Band spring concert will take place on April 15 at 4:00 p.m. in the Blacksburg High School (Price's Fork Road) Auditorium. Plan your finger foods for the reception following the concert.

Welcome new and returning members!



New members

Joe Osburn, trumpet
 Diane Holden, clarinet
 Jonathan Rapp, bassoon
 Jacob Mertz, alto sax
 Mandy Thompson, alto sax
 Katie Lucot, trombone

Returning members

Jason Thompson, trumpet
 Carol Johnson, French horn
 Dean Chiapetto, trombone

Mark your calendars

- April 15, Sunday—Spring Concert, Blacksburg High School, 4:00 pm
- May 28, Monday—Memorial Day at Warm Hearth, 11:00 pm
- June 8, Friday—Eastern Montgomery Park, 6:30 pm
- June 12, Tuesday—Warm Hearth, 7:00 pm
- June 30, Saturday—Community Band Festival in Charlottesville at nTelos Wireless Pavilion, arrive at 2:45 with downbeat at 3:45 pm
- July 4, Wednesday—Independence Day Parade, Main Street, 2:00 pm
- July 4, Wednesday—4th of July Concert, Caboose Park, 6:00 pm
- July 7, Saturday—Rain Date for 4th of July Concert, Caboose Park, 6:00 pm
- July 14, Saturday—Ruritan Fish Fry, 5:30
- July 24, Tuesday—Bisset Park, Radford, 7:00
- August 4, Saturday—Steppin' Out, Blacksburg, 11:30
- October 11, Thursday—Roanoke College Olin Hall Auditorium (tentative), 7:30 pm
- December 16, Sunday—Holiday Concert (tentative), 4:00 pm



HOW TO WRITE A SHOW MEDLEY IN TEN EASY STEPS

by John Howell

So there's no band medley of songs from "Peter Pan." So Ed says, "How'd you like to write one?" So I say, "Sure!" So pride goeth before the fall!

Step One: Find the music. Not so easy. SME hasn't gotten the usual copies of a script and a piano-vocal score because the rental agency is one that usually just deals with plays, not musicals. Ed comes through with CDs of the 1950s original and the 1990s remake to listen to. And tracks down a "Selections From" album of sheet music. Both are invaluable because the songs are really not well known, and it's a LOT easier to write when you have the chord changes in front of you.

Step Two: Listen to the songs and rate them, not according to how important they may be in the show, but how well they would work in a band medley. For this show it actually helps that the songs aren't well-known, so that isn't a factor. But it doesn't help, either.

Step Three: Songs that are important in the show (because of the story line) are very often not very distinctive, and for a band medley you want songs that are distinctive. On the other hand, songs that are distinctive might not be important in the show, but sort of fill-in songs. Makes decisions "interesting."

Step Four: Songs that depend on a particular vocal delivery by a singer might not be as strong as instrumentals. And a typical Musical has 20 to 30 music cues. Some of them are exit music and some of them are scene-change music, but there are probably at least 15 actual songs, some of them repeats ("Reprises"). So, finally narrow it down to about 6 to 8 possible songs.

Step Five: The next step is critical--sequencing the songs. The order of presentation is very important. Any music has to have a beginning, a middle, and an end. But a medley has to move nicely from one song to another, make musical sense, have nice contrasts within it, and STILL have a beginning, a middle and an end. This is actually one of the fun parts of the whole thing, trying to create a whole that's greater than the sum of its parts. (Which is exactly what the show itself is designed to do!)

Step Six: Decision time! And I'll be completely honest: I start out with an outline of what I THINK I'm going to do, but as it goes on the music very often tells me what IT wants to do, and it usually pays off to listen to it! Some people would call that "inspiration." I call it "pure dumb luck!" So, decision one: Start with a little throwaway lullaby tune instead of a big, loud fanfare, and let it build UP to a big, loud fanfare! Then one of the great up-tempo songs that will come back in the ending. (Of course I have no idea what the ending will be yet!) Then, wow, a really weird idea: take one of the main songs but use just a little bit of it as travelin' music between songs. Hey, it might even work!

Step Seven: Oops! All the songs I want to use are in the "Selections From" sheet music except for one, "Ugg-a-Wugg." OK, gonna have to use my ears on that one, and try to reconstruct it off the two CDs. Quite a challenge, but I do it and come pretty close. And I need this song because it's really cute, although in the show it's Peter Pan and a bunch of Indians, and is VERY un-politically correct! And the Indian drumming reminds me of big band jazz drumming and we're off on ANOTHER interesting trip!

Step Eight: Include one really beautiful ballad. Just once through is enough, but every medley should have a beauty spot in it.

Step Nine: Guess what, a character song in the show--a patter song like Gilbert and Sullivan would have written--turns out to be a really nice waltz that sounds great in instruments. Who woulda thunk it?!!

Step Ten: Time for the big finish. Bring back a couple of the strong tunes, mix them up, build things up with a little "development" (hey, it worked for Beethoven!!), and actually end up with a big finish that's shorter than I originally intended, because the music told me, "OK, that's enough, we're done!" and I listened to it.

So you, too, can write your own band medley. It's fun! It's easy! And it'll keep you from wasting your Winter Break!!

Time for Timpani



The band plans to purchase a new kettledrum, so this may be a good time to learn a little more about timpani. The latter term refers to a set of two or more kettledrums played by a single timpanist. It comes from an Italian word that means eardrums or kettledrums, the singular form being *timpano*, which is rarely used in English. The word came into Italian from Latin and into Latin from a Greek word meaning a hand drum. From the same ancient sources English also has *tympanum*, meaning the diaphragm of a telephone or the drum-like part of an ear or insect organ for hearing.

One may say, “The timpani are played ...” with focus on the Italian roots of the word, but if Google can be trusted, it is more common to say, “The timpani is

played ...” with focus on the set being played, one set of kettledrums. The plural term *timpanis* may also be heard, but this can be considered an incorrect double plural like *deers* or *feets*. To avoid problems, one can use the synonym *kettledrums* instead.

This kind of drum can be tuned as required for the passage of music being played. This is accomplished by adjusting the tension on the drumhead, which is usually made of plastic. During a break at rehearsal, you can study the mechanism for tuning the pedal timpani that our band uses. Other mechanisms are also in use. One features a master handle connected to a chain that goes around the top of the drum to control all of the tension rods at once.

Another timpani peculiarity is the variety of drum sticks used to vary the timbre. The head of the stick can be harder or softer depending on its construction, usually felt over a core of wood, and its shape may be oblate, egg-shaped, or nearly round. Its size can also vary.

The timpani timbre can also be varied by striking the head different distances from the edge or by employing other means besides timpani sticks to make sounds. A kettledrum is normally played by striking the head with one or two timpani sticks about four or five inches from the edge. Striking closer to the edge produces a thinner or more brittle sound. Striking closer to the center produces a deader or hollow sound with a less pronounced pitch.

Other special effects can be achieved by rubbing a moistened thumb on the head, placing a cymbal on the head, or even striking the side of the kettledrum instead of its head. A skilled timpanist must also know how to muffle the instrument silently and suddenly, and this can be especially challenging if the set includes more than two drums that must be muffled at the same time.

Kettledrums have a long and interesting history. The most ancient precursors of modern timpani were used in religious ceremonies, but by about 800 years ago pairs of smaller versions, called nakirs, were used mostly for military purposes. One of the pair of drums had lower pitch, one a higher pitch, but both pitches were fixed or not easily adjustable.

By about 600 years ago, various nationalities had switched to larger drums resembling timpani that were carried on horseback with the cavalry. This development especially in the Ottoman Empire led to imitations in Europe, where the timpanists were often accompanied by trumpeters to increase the prestige of the most elite cavalry.

About 400 years ago, it became more common for timpani to be used indoors as well, especially to enhance trumpet fanfares. Eventually, of course, composers expanded on those earlier ideas, and a demand for tunable timpani arose, leading eventually to the modern timpani now in wide use in bands like ours and orchestras. The Wikipedia article that I used as my source for this history mentioned Joseph Haydn, Ludwig Van Beethoven, Hector Berlioz, Robert Schumann, and Richard Strauss as composers who made especially notable contributions to the development of timpani usage that we enjoy today.

We should appreciate not only those innovative composers but also many skilled performers, including our own Steve Brown and Ed Schwartz. Without them, the timpani sounds that enhance our music would be nothing more than a dream.

By Thomas James Godfrey



In our midst. . .

Blacksburg High School junior, **Jeff Ritchie** has been selected as first chair bass trombone of the 2012 Virginia All-State Band. The All-State Band will perform April 12-14 at James River High School in Richmond.

Former band president **Patrick Feucht** visited the band March 14, reporting life is good in Scranton!

Caleb Stinchcomb wrote to the band, thanking the group for the package of goodies, and was able to return for a recent rehearsal. He has recently moved to Panama City Beach, Florida.

Amy Hall was also able to return from Richmond for a recent rehearsal.

Holiday Pops Concert, The Inn at Virginia Tech



Photo courtesy of Shari on Clayburg

J.B. Jones

J.B. Jones retired from the Blacksburg Community Band at the end of 2011, and was recognized for his contributions at holiday concerts. The photos are from the Warm Hearth concert on December 8, as President Jennifer Hundley reads the certificate.



“The Blacksburg Community Band Board of Directors presents this Certificate of Appreciation to J. B. Jones for his dedication to the Blacksburg Community Band. His contribution on tenor saxophone has been greatly appreciated as well as his non-musical contributions through the music sortings and other band activities. J. B. is one of the gentleman musicians that we all strive to emulate! Presented this 11th day of December, 2011.”



Photos courtesy of Sharon Claybaugh

Post your comments to the Band's Facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Blacksburg-Community-Band/256224163378?ref=ts&sk=wall>

Band Officers

2012 BOARD AND OFFICERS

President: Jennifer Hundley—jejohn10@vt.edu, 540-231-9476, 703-772-7707(cell)

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Music Director: Ed Schwartz—ed.schwartz@vt.edu, (c) 808-6102 (w) 231-4975

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Fund Raising Chairperson: Harriett Cooper—chayabrona@verizon.net, 552-3446

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