



The Score

Fall 2016

Director's Notes, Jay Durner

"You have to know where you are before you know where you are going."

This statement is attributed to Stephen Covey, author of the Highly Effective People series of books, but has been used by countless motivators, organizers, and strategic planners for the last several decades. I am so excited that we are embarking on this journey with a few of the students from Virginia Tech to see what direction the band may consider taking in the future! By the time you read this, the surveys will have been completed, so I am not really tainting anyone's input, just sharing my own!

The SWOT survey that we were all given an opportunity to complete is a stepping stone to knowing where we are as an organization. The four corners of the questions were based on Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Without going into a lengthy discussion of each category, here are some of my basic thoughts:

Strengths: I have been amazed since day one at the number of people who come out to rehearsal each week. It is fun to rehearse a group of this size (most of the time!), and I generally feel that we make progress each week. Another strength is the leadership from our board of directors. Our president does a super job of keeping us informed and is highly organized. Our treasurer is a meticulous task master who knows to the penny what we have on hand. These elements help to keep the band afloat and moving ahead. A lot of the work is day-to-day maintenance, but required to keep us healthy.

Weaknesses: Directly related to my amazement of rehearsal attendance is my perception of our biggest weakness: the number of people who don't perform concerts! I am not sure if it is lack of commitment, schedule conflicts, or whatever, but it is sometimes embarrassing to go to a venue, such as Roanoke College, with half of what we have had at rehearsal. I also struggle with getting commitments in advance from the membership for performances. I feel that this weakness prevents us from trying new and different venues for performance, simply because we never know who is going to show up that day!

Opportunities: I think that some opportunities are presented periodically, but, because of some of our weaknesses mentioned earlier, we let them slide by. I believe that this is the quadrant of this survey that we need to look at the hardest! Think about new venues, professional recordings, side-by-side concerts with schools, professional guest soloists as features, etc., etc.

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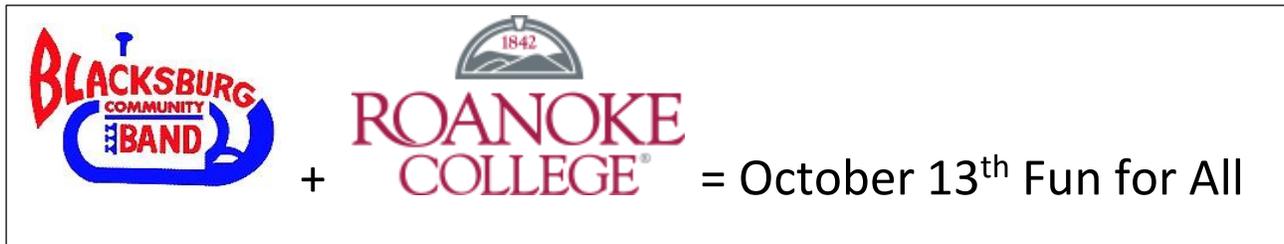
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Threats: External obstacles are those things that we never see coming! What would happen if all of a sudden the county school district decides it is no longer going to allow community groups to use school space? What if our trailer gets stolen? The rental unit with our library burns down? (This actually came fairly close to happening recently!) How would we deal with any of those events? We don't like to think any of these events could occur, but whoever thought a roof could collapse? We should have an action plan in place to address events such as these.

A final thought, also attributed to Covey, "If we keep doing what we are doing, we are going to keep getting what we're getting." Are you okay with that for the Blacksburg Community Band, or is it time to step it up and move ahead?



From our President, Jennifer Hundley

Hello Band,

Welcome to the start of fall rehearsals!

I want to thank the board for all that they do to help the band run efficiently and effectively. If you are interested in serving the band as a historian, board member, or committee member please talk to me or a board member. If there are friends, acquaintances, or past members who would enjoy playing, please invite them to rehearsal. The band is a great opportunity to make music, contribute to the community, and meet new friends.

As an all-volunteer organization, the Blacksburg Community Band has been fortunate to have dedicated and enthusiastic members. The band has a great mission of providing a musical outlet for citizens interested in rekindling or continuing their interest in music while providing free musical entertainment to the community.

The Blacksburg Community Band strives for community involvement. As we celebrate our 27th year we have the wonderful opportunity of being selected as the "Client" for Dr. Douglas Cannon's public relations capstone class. The class is made up of approximately 20 upper-class public relations majors developing real world public relations work experience. The four teams will be gathering information on the band, conducting public relation research, and developing twelve-month plans to address the Blacksburg Community Band's public relations needs. Their work will help the band to develop better methods for community engagement and outreach as we strive to expand our membership and audience.

Warm regards,
Jennifer



From our Assistant Director, Steve Brown

WHAT IS "GOOD" MUSIC?

Before I retired (for those who came in late), I was Music Director for the Public Radio station in Roanoke. It was my job to pick the music that would be played from 9 AM to 4 PM, Monday through Friday, and most Saturday afternoons. My format was "Classical," but I had a pretty wide definition of the term. Beethoven, Mozart, Bach, Brahms, all those guys and their contemporaries, sure. But you'd also get John Williams, Jerome Kern, classic and contemporary films, shows, and occasional symphonic arrangements of more popular music. And people seemed to like it. I got a few complaints, but the overwhelming majority liked it when I'd toss THE IMPERIAL MARCH from STAR WARS, DANCES WITH WOLVES, or even a medley of tunes from different incarnations of SUPERMAN into the mix. Because it was all "good" music.

Like beauty, what makes music "good" lies in the ear of the beholder. There are people who don't like Beethoven, regard Bach as a "Celestial Sewing Machine" ---great, yes, but it just chugga chugga chuggas along---or absolutely love atonal music. My opinion on the latter is that, since it lacks organized melody, harmony, and rhythm, it is by definition not music, but noise. And usually pretty obnoxious noise too.

But good music doesn't have to be great, or even memorable. I especially enjoy the Baroque composer Tomaso Albinoni, but would be hard pressed to quote too many of his themes for you. And Haydn wrote over a hundred symphonies, not a dud among them, and I have three complete sets of them on CD. Play one for me at random, and

4th Annual Fall Concert

October 16, 3:00 PM
Blacksburg High School

Tentative Program to include:

American Overture for Band: Joseph Willcox Jenkins

American Riversongs: Pierre La Plante

Irish Tune from County Derry: Percy Grainger

The Melody Shop: Karl King, Arr. Andrew Glover

Oklahoma!: Richard Rodgers

Pirates of the Caribbean Symphonic Suite: Klaus Badelt, Arr. John Wasson

Road Trip – Canada!: Steven E. Brown

Second American Folk Rhapsody: Clare Grundman

the odds are about 1 in 3 that I could tell you which one it was...And I LOVE Haydn!

It really depends on you, the listener. One of my go-to pieces to lift my spirits is Elgar's FIRST SYMPHONY. It is exciting, romantic, fierce, noble, and much else in turn, and I have seen people fall asleep halfway through the first movement, bored into stupefaction. Phillip Glass is the most successful classical composer alive, but most of his music sounds to me like the repeat key on his computer got stuck. Too many modern composers sound to me as though they couldn't play a C Major scale to save their lives. I do, however, have a guarded respect for those who, like Schoenberg or Berg, are perfectly capable of creating in a conventional manner, and have mastered all techniques of their craft, but choose to write something that sounds more like marbles dropping on tuned metal sinks. They are seeking new roads in music, and may (or may not) be on to something. Only time will tell.

Anyway, what other people tell you is good, from Bach to Bartok, or anything else, doesn't matter. The ultimate question is do YOU think it's good? Music is the most abstract of the communicative arts, and if the music says something to you, has something that resonates in you, it's good. If all it communicates is "I don't think I'd like to meet the composer; it's all so disagreeable," then the composer has failed in his mission and his art. Personally, I agree with Prokofiev: "There are so many beautiful things yet to be said in C Major."

Have you heard the one about the ...

Q: What do you call a drummer in a three-piece suit?

A: "The Defendant"

Q: How many conductors does it take to screw in a light bulb?

A: No one knows; no one ever looks at him.

Q: What do you get when you drop a piano into a mine shaft?

A: A flat miner

Q: What's the similarity between a drummer and a philosopher?

A: They both perceive time as an abstract concept.

Q: What's the difference between a jet airplane and a trumpet?

A: About three decibels

Q: Why do people play trombone?

A: Because they can't move their fingers and read music at the same time.

Q: What's the difference between a saxophone and a chainsaw?

A: You can tune a chainsaw.

Tuba Player: "Did you hear my last recital?"

Friend: "I hope so."

Q: What's the difference between an oboe and a bassoon?

A: You can hit a baseball further with a bassoon.

Q: Why do loud, obnoxious whistles exist at some factories?

A: To give us some sort of appreciation for flutes.

Q: What is the difference between a clarinet and an onion?

A: No one cries when you chop a clarinet into little pieces.

Q: How do you put down a tenor saxophone?

A: Confuse it with a bass clarinet.

Q: How many trumpet players does it take to change a lightbulb?

A: Five. One to handle the bulb and four to tell him how much better they could have done it.

Q: How do you get your viola section to sound like the horn section?

A: Have them miss every other note.

These music jokes always fall flat.

If you think these jokes are bad, you should see the ones we didn't use!

From the pit of “The Music Man,” Bert Blanton



The ever popular Broadway musical, “The Music Man,” was produced this summer by the local Summer Musical Enterprise theatre troop and performed in the VT Haymarket Theater. Several members of our Blacksburg Community Band, including me, were members of the pit orchestra providing the music. Although I play euphonium in the community band, I oiled the slides of my trombone for this, my first experience in “the pit” of a theatre production. So what was it like in the pit?

What can be said of “The Pit” that Poe has not already covered?

“I longed, yet dared not employ my vision. I dreaded the first glance at objects around me. It was not that I feared to look upon things horrible, but I grew aghast there should be nothing to see.” Eventually, he looks, and “My worst thoughts, then, were confirmed. The blackness of eternal night encompassed me. I struggled for breath. The atmosphere was intolerably close.”

Score one for Poe. The pit is dark, but only because light fails to penetrate its great depth. If you have been to a modern zoo and seen confinements that appear open, but in reality keep the animals in with unscalable walls, then you have seen a cheerier form of the pit.

Poe goes on to have his prisoner wig out as he realizes he may be in a confined place, like a coffin. He tests the area around him.

“I thrust my arms wildly above and around me. I felt nothing;... .”

OK, maybe not such a complete analogy after all. One could not have thrust arms wildly around our pit without hitting someone. The pit was full. Maybe not COMPLETELY full, just full in the sense that a can of sardines is full.

For some reason there were no euphoniums in the orchestra. Why no euphoniums? Forget that they are probably, and I speak with no bias here, just saying what everyone knows, the best instruments ever. In the case of the pit they offer the additional advantage of possessing UPRIGHT BELLS. Such a horn has a chance of putting notes over the wall to the audience. Instead, trumpets blew into the director’s podium and the trombones pummeled the backs of the trumpeters’ heads. It could have been bloody. Fortunately, the trumpeters, being veterans of the pit, had developed pretty thick skulls.

The pit had one small open spot, fortunately, because when in one performance the anvil salesman accidentally dropped his samples into the pit, he hit that one open spot. The drums were almost hit; thank goodness no musical instruments were threatened. The actor showed his sense of humor by providing hard hats for the next performance.

At some point in the play, an actor puts a marshmallow in an actress’ mouth. The gesture is unappreciated and she plucks the confection from her mouth. During the last performance she lost her

grip, sending the soft missile into the pit and hitting me on the shoulder. We later had such a good laugh about that. But I had to have an audience member tell me what happened, of course, because we of the pit never see the show

On the plus side, I met new friends, had the opportunity to play fun music with terrific musicians, and reintroduced myself to my trombone. I would enjoy the chance to take to the pit again, only next time without anvils and marshmallows!

Mozart in the Jungle

This Amazon made-for-TV series, based on the nonfiction tell-all book “Mozart in the Jungle” by oboist Blair Tindall, is a tongue-in-cheek adult comedy about the musicians and board members of the fictitious New York Symphony. The story lines focus on the debauchery and back-stabbing alleged in the Tindall book and not the music, which when we hear it, is quite good. Billed as a comedy, the show’s acting and dialog is intentionally so bad that it is humorous.



The conductor, whose character is satirically based on Gustavo Dudamel, must have worked hard to develop his lifeless wooden conducting technique. Initially serious music critics sniffed at the show for its exaggerated and at times inaccurate portrayal of classical music and orchestras, as in this Washington Post review:

https://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/tv/the-off-pitch-mozart-in-the-jungle-charismatic-acting-conducted-among- cliches/2014/12/22/1cbcd300-89aa-11e4-a085-34e9b9f09a58_story.html

But the conductors, including Maestro Dudamel, and musicians, including Emanuel Ax, being satirized, gleefully lined up for bit parts and cameo roles. Here is a link to the NYTimes article about Placido Domingo’s part in the series.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/20/arts/television/mozart-in-the-jungle-placido-domingo.html?emc=eta1>

This is definitely an adult series and the humor may not appeal to all adults. But it is not often that an orchestra is the subject of a TV series, even if it is not exactly a documentary.

Match the movie score with the composer!

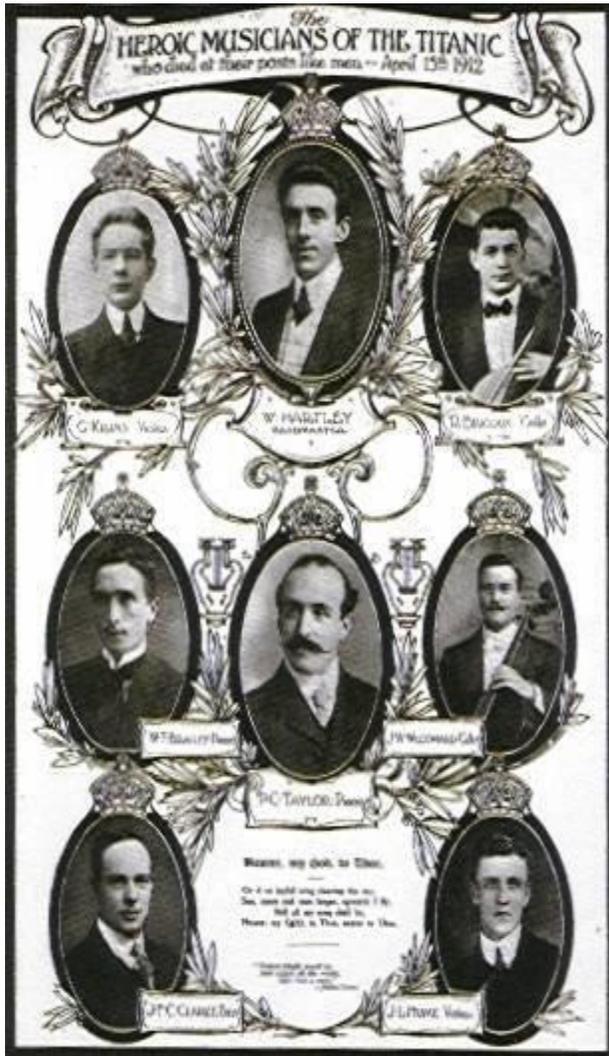
- | | |
|---|------------------|
| A. “Jaws” | 1. Klaus Badelt |
| B. “Out of Africa” | 2. Alan Menken |
| C. “Beauty and the Beast” | 3. John Williams |
| D. “Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl” | 4. John Barry |
| E. “Lord of the Rings: Fellowship of the Ring” | 5. Howard Shore |

Answer below

And the band played on ...

Film scores are an important part of the background of films and are intended to contribute to the context and emotional development of the story. Sometimes the band and music become part of the story. Perhaps one of the most dramatic and familiar example of this is the scene in the 1997 movie “Titanic” when, as the ship is sinking, the string ensemble plays on deck to help maintain a sense of calm. At this point in the story it is evident that the ship will sink, that there are no ships nearby to rescue the passengers, and, because there are not enough life boats, many passengers will drown. In the movie there are several emotional vignettes of passengers and families bravely and stoically facing their death. As the band concludes its playing, one member begins playing “Nearer My God to Thee” on the violin. The other members return to play creating and even greater emotional intensity.

Here is a link to this scene in the 1997 Titanic film (starring Leonardo Dicaprio and Kate Winslet.)



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tlEXQRqbJyg>

The sinking of the Titanic has been the subject of many films. The 1997 DiCaprio film is a close remake of the 1958 “A Night To Remember,” which also has the theme of the class divide between passengers in steerage and those in luxury suites. The scene of the band playing as the ship sinks is almost identical, using the Horbury version on the hymn rather than the Bethany version in the 1997 film. Here is a link to that scene from the 1958 version.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-UyM6jJzuVw>

There is substantial evidence from survivors’ reports that this is a reasonably accurate representation of this dramatic moment. There is some debate about which version of “Nearer My God to Thee” they played, but whichever was played, the actions of the band gained such mythic status that the members have become heroes in England. There is a documentary tribute film, “Titanic: The Band Played On” (available on Amazon) that presents more information about

the band (actually there were two: a quintet and a trio) and their role on the voyage.