



The Blawenburg Band Newsletter

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Small Ensembles

By Coordinator Leslie Rife

The Blawenburg Band Chamber Recital was held Sunday, February 8, 2009, in the Bart Luedeke Student Center Theater on the Rider University campus. Nine groups made up almost entirely of Blawenburg Band members performed a variety of musical numbers.

This enterprise was originally conceived by Tom Boyd who played first clarinet with the band for several years. He felt members might enjoy working together in smaller groups; exploring music for new instrumentations while at the same time becoming more and more accomplished musicians. There have been 5 or 6 ensemble programs to date.

This year's recital began with the saxophone quartet playing first-rate arrangements of the "Pachelbel Canon" and Bach's "Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring." Members included: Neal Azrolan (soprano and alto sax), Ray Auerbach (alto sax), Angelo Carnevale (tenor sax) and Jonathan Holmquist (baritone sax).



From left to right: Jonathan Holmquist, Angelo Carnevale, Ray Auerbach, Neal Azrolan.

Herb Foster then performed "Russian Song" by Buyanovsky. This was a beautiful unaccompanied solo for French horn.

A flute quartet composed of: Edie Howard, Leslie Rife, Dina Robinson, and Marissa Scott performed three pieces. The first piece, "Loch Solas" was the quiet, pensive third movement from "A Gaelic Offering" composed by McMichael. This was followed with the third movement of "Conversation" by Baksa which the composer indicated should be 'puckish.' The final piece was the familiar "Harmonious Blacksmith" by Handel in a theme with variations.



From left to right: Edie Howard, Marissa Scott, Leslie Rife, Dina Robinson

The Brassy Sax group was next on the program. This group has been together for several years and always delights. Their first piece was “Sanctus” by Schubert, which opened in a meditative vein and continued expansive and lush. Then they switched gears just a bit with a medley of Looney Tunes themes arranged for them by Bill Holcomb. Members of the group are: Britt Adams (trumpet), Carolyn Auerbach (baritone), Ray Auerbach (alto sax), Nancy Kays (French horn), and Tom Spain (tuba).

Moving from Toons to the sublime, Sharif Sazzad played two solos for cornet with piano accompaniment provided by Leslie Rife. He opened with “To a Wild Rose” from MacDowell’s “Woodland Sketches,” which was then followed by a modern and very colorful piece called “Kim” by Street. Sharif had discovered this piece about 15 years ago and saved it for us.



From left to right Sharon Hallanan, Nancy Kays, Tracey Fedosh, Tom Spain, Tom Walko, Lisa Dietrich, Herb Foster.



A return of flutists brought Edie and Dina back to the stage to perform two well-known duets. They chose Adagio and Allegro from Sonata 1 by Loeillet. The Adagio is such a lovely movement followed by an Allegro that has almost no opportunities to take a breath. Their final selection was “Air due Fat Puni” by Devienne; a theme and variation which translates to something about a flutist with a fat head.

Charlie Howard (euphonium) played the final solo of the afternoon: “The Carnival of Venice” that well-known theme with variations ending in a very impressive two pages of triple-tonguing—no breath marks allowed in this one either. Leslie Rife accompanied on piano.



Herb Foster, Solo Horn

Next the audience found themselves in the envious position of listening to a group of 6 horns, supported by tuba in a lovely arrangement of "Ave Maria" by Biebl. The arranger was Brubaker who is himself a French horn player and ever-loyal to his section when it comes to providing beautiful parts to play in contrast to the off-beats that are somewhat pervasive in the band repertoire. Playing horns were: Lisa Dietrich, Tracey Fedosh, Herb Foster, Sharon Hallanan, Nancy Kays, and Tom Walko. Tom Spain played tuba.

Winning the spot of "closer" was the Lambertville Brass Band. Members are Sharif Sazzad, Dave Robbins, Richard Fedosh (cornet); Tracey Fedosh, Sharon Hallanan,

Nancy Kays (horn); Alisa Liten (trombone), and Tom Spain (tuba). This group has been playing together for a year or so and opened with a hymn “Abide with Me” played by memory standing in close formation. The second piece was “Satin Doll” by Ellington, arranged by Fernie and adapted for this group by Sharif Sazzad. Their final piece was “James Bond Medley” by Norman *et. al*, arranged by Richard and again adapted for this group by Sharif.



Lambertville Brass. From left to right Richard Fedosh, Dave Robbins, Sharif Sazzad, Sharon Hallanan, Tracey Fedosh, Nancy Kays, Tom Spain, Alisa Liten.

Many thanks to everyone who participated in the recital this year. Your musical contribution was very much appreciated. Also, many thanks to Jerry Rife who helped with stands, stage lights, and staging; Herb Foster, Edie Howard, and the Hallanan’s for recording the program; and to Laraine Schwartz for the accompanying photographs.

Leslie Rife

The Blawenburg Band would like to thank Leslie Rife for organizing this wonderful afternoon of music.

Saxophone Sectional

February 2009

The following sectional was compiled for her section by Pat Potavin. All players provided responses to questions that Pat put to themⁱ.

Angelo Carnevale

I have been playing the sax for 66 years. When my Dad decided that it was time for my brother and I to begin playing a musical instrument, he went to Grooms Music Store and he purchased a trumpet and a alto e flat saxophone. Upon returning home Dad gave me one case and the other went to my brother. My case contained the sax and the rest is history.

One of the challenges of playing the sax is keeping the old used instrument in playing condition. It should be noted that during the 1940s we were involved in World War II and transportation and available funds were at a minimum.

I have been in the Blawenburg band for about 22 or 23 years. What I like about the Blawenburg band is the fact that we have evolved over the years into a close organization that makes good music. The members appear to enjoy their time together. I have also played with many musical groups including marching, concert, and Jazz bands.

With respect to memorable musical experiences to share, it could take several chapters but I'll mention two. The first was my experience playing with a professional marching band. We played a parade for a Pennsylvania Dutch community located in western Pa. in which the residents did not come out to see the bands but rather the bands marched every street in the town (about 5 miles) quite an experience. Then upon returning from my military tour in Germany, I organized a Jazz band on ship board and we played our way daily from Deutschland to New York. It was especially exciting during two stormy nites.

David Waltz

I have been playing the sax for 57 years (!), but with two very long gaps when I didn't play at all (college until maybe 15 years after college, when I started playing in the Parkland Community Band in Champaign, IL) then another 10 years after we moved from Illinois to MA, starting again when we moved to NJ in 1993.

I started playing the sax in the fourth grade. The school I attended (Tuscan School, Maplewood, NJ) offered lessons on instruments of your choice. I picked the alto sax because my uncle played sax – he would often play in the evenings to entertain my family in Maine in those pre-TV days. The lessons on all instruments were taught by Mr.

Zhubaka (sp?). (My grandfather, who was an immigrant from Russia, thought that this name was very funny – it either meant “dog” or “barker” in Russian, if I remember correctly.) I also started lessons with Paul Thetford in South Orange. He had played with the Sousa band, and had pictures on his walls of the Sousa band with his picture marked.

There are some challenges to playing the sax. I find fast passages that are not scales or chromatic scales challenging. Also rapidly tongued note series are hard, both because it takes a fair amount of air for each note, and because coordinating fingering and breath/tongue gets hard as rates increase. A related challenge is that I have a long commute and often need to work in the evening, so I seldom have the time and energy to practice outside of regular Band practices. That said, the sax is one of the easier instruments to play overall, I think. The two main octaves of the sax have almost identical fingering, and the music written for sax in general has many fewer notes per page than parts for clarinets or flutes.

I joined the Blawenburg band in 1993, at the urging of Tom Spain. Tom’s wife, Linda, is the sister of Bonnie’s first cousin’s wife (got that?) and we had met Tom before moving to NJ. My first contact with the band was at a Christmas concert at the Griggstown Gazebo on a very cold night. Despite that somewhat inauspicious beginning, I was soon hooked, and have been a regular ever since.

What I enjoy most about the Blawenburg band is being in the middle of musical pieces I like. It’s such a rich experience, a much richer experience than listening as an audience. I like the challenge of learning to play pieces well that I/we can barely play at all at first reading. I enjoy the camaraderie of the band, and the appreciation of our various audiences.

When I started playing with the band, the band played everything forte or louder. Dynamics were just about non-existent. Timing was ragged, and – coupled with the loud playing – the band tended to get faster and faster as pieces “progressed”. It was still fun, and fortunately my ragged skills didn’t stand out as glaringly as they would have if I had joined the band today with the skill level I had then. It’s been immensely satisfying to come to the point of truly playing musically as a group.

Pat Potavin

I have been playing the sax for about 18 years. I began when my son was in 5th grade. He came home from school one day saying that he wanted to play the sax. Admittedly, I tried to convince him to play clarinet or oboe but he wanted the sax. Since I was paying for music lessons and the rental of the instrument, I decided that 2 of us may as well be playing the sax. Unfortunately my son lost interest in music during middle school, but I continued with the lessons. (I was a violinist in my high school orchestra, but I had always wanted to play clarinet or oboe. Because I wore braces in high school, I was not permitted to play a reed instrument.)

I have been with the Blawenburg band for 14 years. Frank Haines, former trombone player, and I were friends through our mutual interest in church Handbells. We were both Directors of a church Handbell choir. We played in each other’s choir when necessary.

He told me about the Blawenburg band and after attending several concerts, I knew that I wanted to join.

A memorable musical experience for me has to do with handbells and not the sax. Many years ago I had the opportunity to attend a Handbell Master Class in Scottsdale, Arizona, under the direction of Cynthia Dobrinski. Cynthia is a world renowned composer of handbell music. Although the class in itself was an awesome experience, my friend and I found ourselves sitting at the same table as Cynthia for lunch. It was just the 3 of us and for an hour, we spoke to her about her music, her composing, and even her personal life. It was a very memorable hour.

Although my musical passion is playing and directing handbells, what I love about the Blawenburg band is that it is such an inviting group of people and I love playing with such expert musicians. Also, I learn a lot from Jerry with respect to conducting, and overall musicality. I am able to apply some of his techniques in my capacity as a Handbell Director. I am currently in my 21st year as Director of Handbells for Our Lady of Sorrows church in Mercerville.

Jonathan Holmquist

I started playing the sax in the 5th grade. I played the alto until senior high and then switched to the bari. I played the bari through senior high and four years in the St. Olaf Concert Band. The St. Olaf Band experience was amazing for me musically; the quality was extremely high and as a small-town boy from rural Minnesota it was an ear-opening experience. I have been playing the tenor in the Blawenburg Band.

I think the challenge for me in playing the sax is combining accuracy with a good individual sound and good sectional sound.

I have been playing in the Blawenburg Band since 1998. I learned about the band from both Emily Heine (we are members of the same church) and Bob Ebert (who was my dissertation advisor at Princeton).

I enjoy the opportunity to make music with the Blawenburg Band. I also appreciate the fact that Jerry pushes me and others to produce music with a combination of technical accuracy and musicality. Also, I have enjoyed the opportunity to play in an ensemble with my son, Carl, on the occasions when he has been able to play with us.

Neal Azrolan

I started as many of us did, in grade school at 10 years of age. Do I have to say how many years ago?...well, I'm now 53---you can do the math. I really wanted to play the trumpet (it's still my favorite instrument), but my music teacher, Al Parker needed someone to play baritone sax for a jazz version of Winchester Cathedral that he had just written. He knew me previously from recorder class and he thought that I would be able to handle the part; I guess it was onward from there. I really enjoyed it and I don't think I disappointed him.

The challenges for the sax are similar to most other instruments: finding time to rehearse, putting up with nasty remarks from people outside your open window when you practice, and being forced to be at the front of jazz and rock ensembles (but I've learned to enjoy that). However, relative to many other instruments in the band, I think the sax is rather simple and easy to play. It has a lot fewer keys than the clarinet, oboe or bassoon, and is a lot easier to blow than the French horn, trumpet or oboe (a LOT easier than oboe, I think....). The ease of playing this instrument and the similarities among the different size horns (all the saxes have the same fingerings for the same notes) have allowed me to play them all; and I love each, for their unique qualities.

I found out about the band from Ray Auerbach's daughter Linda, who works in Farrington's Music in Princeton (Where my son has his guitar lessons). When she told me how much her dad enjoyed playing in it, and how good she thought they were, I started practicing again, with the hope that I might be accepted. Prior to that, I hadn't picked up my horn in over 15 years, mostly because my wife at the time didn't really understand or appreciate music and what it meant to me. Well, I have a new wife now Caroline, who supports me, plays the flute (so she gets it) and loves music. With Caroline's support and love (and sore ears!), I practiced for about 4 months and then came to the band in November of 2007.

What I love about the Blawenburg band is of course the music. But I think mostly I like playing with and enjoying the people. The members of the band embraced me from the very beginning. They are a wonderful clan, and I am so glad to be one of them. (Just don't tell Caroline that I "play with and enjoy people"....I think that might get me in trouble!)

I play in a blues band when I can manage the time; jazz is my favorite form of music.

As far as memorable musical experiences, since divorcing my former wife (who didn't understand music), music has become an important bond that I share with my kids. My son Brian (16) plays guitar and Matt (19) plays drums. Before I moved from their house, I provided Matt with a large drum set, and Brian with a 100 Watt guitar amplifier. They love playing loud together....it works!!

Note from the Editor: Thank you Pat Potavin for coordinating the Saxophone Sectional.

ⁱ For a photograph of some of the saxophone players, see Picture of the Saxophone Quartet page 2 of this issue.