

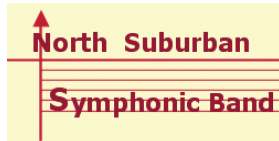


# IN CONCERT

Community Music Groups Working Together

*A Newsletter of Southwestern Pennsylvania Band Partners*

## Once Upon A Time . . . . The Story of the North Suburban Symphonic Band



Volume 4, Issue 3  
Summer 2008

By Kathy Wikowski, NSSB Board of Directors

Once upon a time in the North Hills of Pittsburgh, in the spring of 1992 to be exact, Warren Mercer, Band Director at North Hills Senior High School, retired after 32 years of daily band rehearsals, football seasons, marching band festivals, concerts, Carnegie Awards, commissioned works and many, many students. It all went by so fast! He wasn't ready to hang up his baton and thought about what he could do since he still enjoyed teaching and conducting. Former students and family encouraged him to start a community band, since the North Hills didn't have one. It had a community orchestra, and several small bands here and there, but no community BAND. In September, 1992 an article appeared in the North Hills News Record inviting "amateur and professional players" to attend a rehearsal at the North Allegheny Intermediate School for the "North Suburban Community Band." 80 musicians showed up! There was hardly room in the band room for everyone! It was wonderful! The first concert was in November, 1992 at Warren Mercer's church's fellowship hall where both the audience and the band sat on the same floor level on folding chairs. And that's how it all started.

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In the first year, the name was changed to what it is today and the NSSB is now in its 17<sup>th</sup> season. The personnel have changed, conductors have come and gone, and sadly, we lost Warren Mercer to cancer in April of 2007 but his idea of a community band where everyone who is an interested musician is welcome is still going strong and we now have about 75 members in the group. Carl T. Iezzi took over the podium in 2002, and Sean Desguin was appointed the Assistant Director a few years later.

In August, 1996 the NSSB received its 501(c)(3) status as a Non-Profit and in 1997 received its first grant from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. The Band has received grants each year since 1997 from various grant organizations including the GPAC (Greater Pittsburgh Arts Alliance), DCED (Department of Community and Economic Development) and in 2008 we were pleased to be able to put the RAD (Allegheny Regional Asset District) "sun" logo ("RAD Works Here") on our concert programs as the result of a grant received in January of 2008. The grants have been used to buy music, pay for guest soloists, purchase music stands (for our move to the Masonic Center) and percussion equipment. In September, 2006 the NSSB fulfilled a long-term

*(Continued on page 2) North Suburban Symphonic Band*



### **Southwestern PA Community Bands—updates from last issue**

There are no updates from the last issue. If you are aware of community bands in the region that are not yet in the online directory please let them know about us. We currently have 23 groups listed in our directory from the Southwestern Pennsylvania region.

- See the complete list of Southwestern PA Community Bands at: <http://swpabandpartners.pghfree.net/bands.html>
- To be added to the online directory, send email to [newsletter@swpabandpartners.pghfree.net](mailto:newsletter@swpabandpartners.pghfree.net)

*(Continued from page 1) North Suburban Symphonic Band*

goal of finding a permanent home, after years of rehearsing and performing in two different schools. The NSSB now performs and rehearses at The Greater Pittsburgh Masonic Center located on Cemetery Lane in the North Hills. This is a beautiful facility, which includes a 500-seat auditorium.

The NSSB has played with many talented and well-known soloists over the years, however the true success of the band continues to be the volunteer musicians who bring their considerable talents to the band. We welcome musicians of all abilities and encourage high school students to participate in a community band experience and we do not and never will require auditions, as our Board and Conductor feel strongly that a community band is open to everyone who is interested in participating. An important part of the NSSB's Mission Statement reads in part: "The NSSB will contribute to the audience appreciation of wind band literature through the medium of public concerts, encourage the young people in the area school districts towards the benefits of participation in musical organizations in both school and community and above all, maintain and expand the role of the community band in America."

The NSSB meets every Monday evening at the Masonic Center at 7:30 PM for a two-hour rehearsal from September through May. Four concerts are presented each season on Sunday afternoons at 3:00 PM. We now have added the North Suburban "Big Band" Jazz Band (NSBB) under the baton of Carl Iezzi that performs each summer in July at St. John's Lutheran Church on Cumberland Road in the North Hills and also a Dixieland Band under the baton of Sean Desquin, which travels to various venues, in addition to a brass ensemble and woodwind ensemble.

It has been quite a trip down memory lane for me to write this article for the SWBPPA Newsletter, as I was one of the Founding Members of the NSSB, and only one of three that are left in the present membership from the original group. I also knew Warren Mercer from the 5<sup>th</sup> grade when I first took French Horn lessons from him, until his death in 2007. He left a wonderful legacy for us to carry on because no matter what happens in the world, music never goes out of style, never gets old, and always brings a smile to everyone's face. That is what makes it all worthwhile.

Kathy Wikowski, President  
NSSB Board of Directors

P.S. We have a great web site developed by one of our baritone players with more information on the NSSB - take a look! [www.nssband.org](http://www.nssband.org)



## Reflections from the 30th Annual Association of Concert Bands Convention in Corning New York

By Sarah McElfresh

The middle of the first week in April saw us pack up the car with our instruments (baritone horn and bass clarinet), suitcases (including performing clothes) and toys for the kids and head north to Corning, New York for the 30th Annual Convention of the Association of Concert Bands. This was the second ACB Convention that I had been to and the third for my husband Scott. In 2006 we went to the convention held in Williamsport, PA and decided that from here on out we would attend as many future conventions as we could. Scott attended one in Burlington, VT a number of years ago and performed with the Upper Valley Community Band. This one in Corning was a little different for me in that our band had been selected to perform on Friday night which meant Friday afternoon we would be awaiting the bus from Pittsburgh and going to our sound check instead of visiting the local attractions as many other convention goers would be doing.

Scott and I drew straws as it were to see who would get to participate in the Convention Band and which one of us would get to spend the rehearsal time with our 2 children ages 2 and 4. I won and played in the convention band with 138 other musicians while he got to have some quality time with the girls.

So what is the ACB Convention you might ask. It is an annual event of the Association of Concert Bands held in various parts of the country that is sponsored by one or more local community bands with support of ACB. Each convention has clinics on various topics, convention band rehearsal and concerts, lots of concerts! Each night of the convention there is a performance by one or more bands and Saturday afternoon is filled with concerts. The number of concerts each night varies by convention.

On Wednesday night, the convention opened with an inspiring performance by the United States Military Academy Band (West Point). They played traditional band music and patriotic favorites and a piece called "Journey Through Orion" which ACB commissioned that premiered in 2006. Thursday night convention goers and the general public were treated to concerts by the Hornell Area Wind Ensemble (NY) and the Perinton Concert Band (Rochester, NY). Friday night was Pennsylvania night with performances by The Repasz Band from Williamsport and (my band) the East Winds Symphonic Band from Pittsburgh. Saturday afternoon and evening there were 4 concerts — The Chesapeake Silver Cornet Brass Band (DE), The Honeoye Falls Community Concert Band (NY), The ACB Convention Band, and the host band, The Corning Area Community Concert Band. The Corning Area Community Band was joined by the Sgro Brothers and Ken VanEtten on harmonica for a performance of Sousa "Harmonica Wizard"; and Harry Watters on trombone for "Tribute to New Orleans" and "Flight of the Bumblebee."

The first clinic of Thursday morning was by Allan McMurray, Chair of the Conducting Faculty, and Director of Bands at the University of Colorado-Boulder, who was also the Convention Band Conductor. His presentation was entitled "The Path of the Artist" where talked about the role of music in his life, his philosophy as a conductor, and his reasons for each selection he made for the convention band. We then broke for our first rehearsal. All 139 of us picked up our music, found our



## Combined Calendar of Events for Summer 2008

*As of June 20, 2008*

<b>July 2008</b>	Tue, 1	7pm	Allegheny Brass Band	Kennywood Park
	Thu, 3	8pm	Allegheny Brass Band	Harmony Inn, Harmony
	Fri, 4	4pm	Mon Valley Community Band	Kennywood Park
	Fri, 4	8pm	Harrisville Community Band	Grove City
	Fri, 4		West Hills Symphonic Band	Moon Park, Moon
	Sat, 5	4pm	Kiski Valley Community Band	Kennywood Park
	Sat, 5	7pm	East Winds Symphonic Band	Kennywood Park
	Sat, 5	8pm	Somerset County Comm. Band	Indian Lake Fireworks
	Sun, 6	10:30am	Allegheny Brass Band	Bach, Beethoven & Brunch Mellon Park, Shadyside
	Sun, 6	2pm	Pine Creek Community Band	Kennywood Park
	Sun, 6	2pm	Somerset County Comm. Band	Music on the Square, Bedford
	Sun, 6	7pm	Kiski Valley Community Band	On the Diamond at Ligonier
	Sun, 6	7pm	Ohio Valley Community Band	Kennywood Park
	Tue, 8	7pm	Scottdale Concert Band	Scottdale Gazebo
	Tue, 8	7pm	Armstrong Concert Band	West Kittanning Firehall
	Thu, 10	7pm	Kittanning Firemen's Band	Freeport Gazebo (along the river)
	Thu, 10	7:30pm	The Musicians Concert Band	Slippery Rock University's Miller Auditorium
	Sun, 13	2:30pm	Community Band South	Bethel Park Community Center
	Sun, 13	3pm	East Winds Symphonic Band	Twin Lakes Park, Westmoreland County
	Sun, 13		Jeannette Community Band	Ascension Church Italian Festival, Jeannette
	Sun, 13	7pm	Somerset County Comm. Band	Hooversville Historical Society, Community Building
	Thu, 17	7pm	Delmont Community Band	Blairsville Recreation Area
	Sat, 19	7pm	Armstrong Concert Band	Crooked Creek Lake Park, Ford City
	Sat, 20	2:30pm	Somerset County Comm. Band	Somerfest (Laurel Arts/Dressler Center)
	Sat, 20	6:30pm	Pittsburgh Civic Orchestra	Cannonsburg Town Park
	Thu, 24	7pm	Delmont Community Band	Redstone, Greensburg
	Thu, 24	7pm	Jeannette Community Band	McKee Parking Lot – Jeannette Community Days
	Thu, 24	7:30pm	The Musicians Concert Band	Slippery Rock University's Miller Auditorium
	Sat, 26	2pm	Somerset County Comm. Band w/ Youngstown Area Comm Concert Band	Boardman Park, Boardman, Ohio
	Sat, 26	7pm	Armstrong Concert Band	Ford Cliff Boro Building
	Sat, 26	7:30pm	North Suburban Big Band	St John's Lutheran Church of Highland, McCandless
	Sun, 27	10:30am	Aeolian Winds of Pittsburgh	Bach, Beethoven & Brunch, Mellon Park, Shadyside
	Sun, 27	2pm	Blairsville Comm. Concert Band	Sts. Simon & Jude Church Bazaar
Sun, 27	6:30pm	East Winds Symphonic Band	Tall Trees Amphitheatre, Monroeville	
Sun, 27	7pm	Allegheny Brass Band	On the Diamond at Ligonier	
Thu, 31	6:30pm	Kittanning Firemen's Band	Kittanning Folk Festival, Kittanning YMCA	

**August and September Concert Calendar on page 5**

Please visit <http://swpabandpartners.pghfree.net/calendar.html> for updates  
Email [calendar@swpabandpartners.pghfree.net](mailto:calendar@swpabandpartners.pghfree.net) to have concerts added



## Combined Calendar of Events for Summer 2008 (cont.)

*As of June 20, 2008*

<b>Aug 2008</b>	Sat, 2	7pm	Penn Trafford Community Band	Twin Lakes Park, Westmoreland County
	sat, 2	7pm	Somerset County Comm. Band	Shanksville Community Day
	Sun, 3	3:30pm	Allegheny Brass Band	Bethel Park Community Center
	Sun, 3	7pm	East Winds Symphonic Band	On the Diamond at Ligonier
	Tue, 5	7:15pm	Jeannette Community Band	Redstone Highlands, North Huntingdon
	Thu, 7	7pm	East Winds Symphonic Band	Community Park, Rotary Amphitheater, Cranberry
	Thu, 7	7:30pm	The Musicians Concert Band	Slippery Rock University's Miller Auditorium
	Sat, 9	2pm	Somerset County Comm. Band	Otterbein Church Picnic (near Wilbur)
	Sun, 10	1pm	Somerset County Comm. Band	Central City Heritage Festival
	Sun, 10	7pm	Community Band South	On the Diamond in Ligonier
	Sat, 16	11:30am	Blairsville Comm. Concert Band	Blairsville Diamond Days
	Sat, 16	5:30pm	Somerset County Comm. Band	Hidden Valley Homeowners picnic
	Sun, 17	10am	Somerset County Comm. Band	Trinity Lutheran Church, Somerset
	Sun, 17	7pm	Delmont Community Band	On the Diamond at Ligonier
	Sun, 17		Scottdale Concert Band	Loucks Park, Scottdale
	Thu, 21	7pm	Aeolian Winds of Pittsburgh	Mt. Lebanon Public Library
	Fri, 22	7:30pm	Allegheny Brass Band	Moon Park, Moon
	Sun, 24	7pm	Somerset County Comm. Band	On the Diamond at Ligonier
Thu, 28	7pm	Delmont Community Band	Concordia- Haven 4, Sarver	
<b>Sept. 2008</b>	Sat, 13	8pm	Allegheny Brass Band	McCandless Township Community Day
	Thu, 25	6pm	Aeolian Winds of Pittsburgh	National Aviary
	Sat, 27	11am	Blairsville Comm. Concert Band	Blue Spruce Park, Covered Bridge Festival
	Sun, 28	2pm	Somerset County Comm. Band	Whiskey Rebellion, Berlin

*(Continued from page 3) ACB Convention*

chairs and got ready to play. Over the next three days we would rehearse our selections for the Saturday evening concert and in the process make some new friends. We played an American themed concert starting with our roots across the sea with "Florentiner". Other selections included "Chester Overture", Copeland's "Variations on Shaker Melody", "Hands Across the Sea", "An American Elegy" and "American Pageant."

Between convention band rehearsals there were other clinics on various topics. The Srgo Brothers and Ken VanEtten gave a presentation on the history of the harmonica complete with music which they performed. Harry Watters gave a clinic on power practicing.

Performing with my band on Friday night was such a thrill (Scott also performed with EWSB, a

*(Continued on page 6) ACB Convention*



(Continued from page 5) *ACB Convention*

member of our band from the Corning area helped us find a babysitter). You spend months preparing the music to as close to perfection as possible for a concert on the national stage. From the down beat to the final cut off, the adrenaline was pumping. We played some really exciting, challenging, and fun music from “Danza Finale” to “Opening Night on Broadway” to “Incantation and Dance” just to name a few. When it was all over, I turned to one of the Bari sax players and he said “Can we do it again!” Performing at ACB with my band and with the convention band gave a different dynamic to the convention for me. It was thoroughly enjoyable and I look forward to attending next year in Houston. Even though it will be Scott’s turn to play in the Convention Band and I won’t have that experience, the convention has so much to offer!

Each convention is different, but the common threads are music and friendship. Getting together each spring with people from across the country who enjoy do the same thing you do—playing your instrument in a community band.

<b>Future ACB Conventions</b>	2009	Houston, Texas	April 15—19
	2010	Plano, Texas	April 14—18
	2011	Muskegon, Michigan	May 11—15
	2012	Poughkeepsie, New York	April 25—29

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

## Discount tickets to The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

Save these Dates - The Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra welcomes Southwestern PA Band Partner members! Join us Oct. 31- Nov 2, 2008 for Strauss' *Alpine Symphony*, and December 5 -6, 2008 for Bernstein's *West Side Story Symphonic Dances*, string trio Time for Three and Copland's *Symphony No 3*. Southwestern PA Band Partner members enjoy discounted tickets and personalized service through Marianne Haffey - call 412.392.3320 or mhaffey@pittsburghsymphony.org for further information on these and any other PSO/Heinz Hall performances. Just mention "Band Partners"!

## Association of Concert Bands ~ Summer Membership Drive

The Association of Concert Bands is offering a “Try Us” membership rate of 1/2 off the annual dues if you join by October 1. That means it is \$15 for an individual membership, \$22.50 for a family membership, \$25 for an organizational membership, and \$75 for a corporate membership. Membership benefits include subscription to The ACB Journal, participation in the annual convention and convention band, access to ACB Membership Directory and other ACB publications online.

For more information about ACB and a membership application see <http://www.acbands.org>



## New Music Corner

This section is intended to be a place for conductors and musicians to share information on new music they are playing. If you have something to contribute please email us the information at [newsletter@swpabandpartners.pghfree.net](mailto:newsletter@swpabandpartners.pghfree.net) with "New Music Corner" in the subject line. Please include the title, composer/arranger, publisher and a brief description of the piece.

### **An American Elegy**

Composer: Frank Ticheli

Published: 2000

Grade: 4

Performance time: 11 min

Publisher: Manhattan Beach

Frank Ticheli's website: <http://www.FrankTicheli.com>

Compiled by Sarah McElfresh

Sources: [http://www.manhattanbeachmusiconline.com/frank\\_ticheli/html/an\\_american\\_elegy.html](http://www.manhattanbeachmusiconline.com/frank_ticheli/html/an_american_elegy.html)

I recently played this piece at the Association of Concert Bands 30th Annual Convention as a member of the Convention Band, with Allan McMurray as conductor. An American Elegy was "composed in memory of those who lost their lives at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999, and to honor the survivors." At the time of the tragedy at Columbine, McMurray was working with the Columbine High School Band for an upcoming performance. The UC-Boulder's music fraternity, Alpha Iota Chapter of Kappa Kappa Psi, commissioned "An American Elegy" on behalf of the Columbine High School Band. The piece was premiered by the Columbine High School Band, with Frank Ticheli as guest conductor on April 23, 2000. During Convention Band rehearsals and the performance, music's healing power was evident, as was McMurray's passion for the piece. This is a beautiful piece that captures the American spirit of rising from tragedy and moving ahead without forgetting the past.

Here is the description of the piece from the program notes referenced at the above URL.

The work begins at the bottom of the ensemble's register, and ascends gradually to a heartfelt cry of hope. The main theme that follows, stated by the horns, reveals a more lyrical, serene side of the piece. A second theme, based on a simple repeated harmonic pattern, suggests yet another, more poignant mood. These three moods - hope, serenity, and sadness - become intertwined throughout the work, defining its complex expressive character. A four-part canon builds to a climactic quotation of the Columbine Alma Mater. The music recedes, and an offstage trumpeter is heard, suggesting a celestial voice - a heavenly message. The full ensemble returns with a final, exalted statement of the main theme.





## IN CONCERT:

Community Music Groups working together  
*A Newsletters of Southwestern Pennsylvania Band Partners*

Southwestern Pennsylvania Band Partners is dedicated to helping community music groups in the southwestern Pennsylvania Region.

Please visit us online at the address below to learn more or become involved.

<http://swpabandpartners.pghfree.net>

To be on our mailing list send email to [swpabandpartners-subscribe@yahoo.com](mailto:swpabandpartners-subscribe@yahoo.com) with the subject subscribe

### **Regional Band Web sites**

#### **Aeolian Winds**

<http://www.aeolianwinds.com/>

#### **Allegheny Brass Band**

<http://www.alleghenybrassband.com/>

#### **Armstrong Concert Band**

<http://www.geocities.com/armconband>

#### **Blairsville Community Concert Band**

<http://www.bccb.com>

#### **Butler County Symphony**

<http://www.butlersymphony.org/>

#### **Community Band South**

<http://cbs.pghfree.net/>

#### **East Winds Symphonic Band**

<http://www.ewsb.org/>

#### **Edgewood Symphony**

<http://www.edgewoodsymphony.org>

#### **Harmony-Zelienople Community Band**

<http://www.hzcb.org>

#### **Harrisville Community Band**

<http://www.harrisvilleband.com/>

#### **Jeannette Community Band**

<http://www.jcbweb.com/>

#### **Kiski Valley Community Band**

<http://www.kvcb.net>

#### **Kittanning Firemen's Band**

<http://www.kfband.com/>

#### **Musicians Concert Band**

<http://www.musiciansconcertband.com/>

#### **North Pittsburgh Philharmonic**

<http://www.northpghphilharmonic.org>

#### **North Suburban Symphonic Band**

<http://www.nssband.org/>

#### **Penn Trafford Community Band**

<http://www.penntownship.biz/PTband>

#### **Pine Creek Community Band**

<http://www.pinecreekband.com/>

#### **Pittsburgh Civic Orchestra**

<http://www.artsnet.org/pco/>

#### **Scottdale Concert Band**

<http://www.scottdaleband.com/>

#### **Somerset County Community Band**

<http://www.somersetcounty.com/band>

#### **West Hills Symphonic Band**

<http://www.whsb.org/>

#### **Westmoreland Symphonic Winds**

<http://www.wswinds.org/>

## Contributing to the newsletter

Everyone is welcome to contribute an article to the newsletter. The topic is up to you—something you think your fellow musicians would be interested in.

Just email your article to:

[newsletter@swpabandpartners.pghfree.net](mailto:newsletter@swpabandpartners.pghfree.net)

For additions to the web site email:

[info@swpabandpartners.pghfree.net](mailto:info@swpabandpartners.pghfree.net)

## In the next newsletter

- Reflections from Band Camp—why you should go next summer.
- Please send us information on new music for the new music corner.

### Editors

Sarah McElfresh, East Winds Symphonic Band

Scott McElfresh, East Winds Symphonic Band

Kathy Wikowski, Allegheny Brass Band, North Suburban Symphonic Band