

July 8, 2003

## **Musical Director's Report**

We are making good progress towards the state titles, but it's time to get serious! It is rewarding to hear the improvement by several individuals in the band – this is the type of commitment we need from all members. Every note of every part is important. It is attention to detail that makes a great band. One wrong note, missed staccato mark or late release will spoil the whole band. We also need to move out of sight reading mode (one note after the other) to a better understanding of phrases and the style of entire sections of the music.

The next two Sunday rehearsals will be for full band. Chris Earl will be here on the last weekend of July. We need to have the programme at competition standard before then. I am looking forward to hearing another director's interpretation. Chris won't be much interested in pointing out wrong notes, poor articulation or out-of-tune playing.

The value for us in his visit will be in the concentration required to perform at a high standard with a new conductor. The notes have to be automatic so you can think seriously about the real issues in making fine music: rhythmic stability; perfect intonation; balance of parts; and an understanding of the composer's wishes. None of this can happen while you are still deciding whether the next note is a B flat or a B natural.

Please spend the time required to make your part perfect. Concentrate on the difficult sections and use a metronome. One valuable practice technique is to play in small groups. I highly recommend getting together as family groups, as sections, or with a few friends and playing the test pieces as concert performances. This can be a great way to improve your intonation and rhythm skills.

I will be available every Monday evening from 7:00 pm till 8:30 pm until the competition for any players who feel they could use some extra help. Home practice with a metronome is important, but having someone sit next to you and play along is even better. Everyone is welcome.

## **Gigs**

Our next recital is the Hymnfest at 2:15 pm, Sunday August 3, at St Matthew's church. We begin with *Swedish Folk Song*, then play *Amazing Grace* and *Jerusalem* during the afternoon. We may also be asked to play a medley of simple hymn arrangements before the show. At the conclusion of the festival we will play a shortened version of our contest piece *Impromptu*.

Our full dress rehearsal at Catholic College Wodonga will take place on Wednesday, August 13, at 7:30 pm. Please check well in advance that you have a full uniform, cleaned and pressed, with shiny black shoes. The items will be as follows.

*Star Trek*  
*Mumbo Jumbo*  
*Amazing Grace*  
*Cruella De Vil*  
*Grand Concerto for Euphonium*  
*Swedish Folk Song*  
*Impromptu*  
*Prelude and Ballad for Flugel Horn*  
*Breezin' Down Broadway*  
*Le Tricot Rouge*  
*Bugler's Holiday*

Each family will be given four tickets to sell for this event, and extras will be available for anyone who needs them. The admission price of \$2.50 will include a printed programme, a fabulous recital by us, and supper. Encourage all your friends and workmates to attend. It will be a great night.

### **Future plans**

I spent some time with Chris Earl in Bendigo this week discussing possibilities for a junior band and additional music for our current beginner group. Two companies, *Obrasso* and *Studio Music*, have recently released excellent material suitable for all players in their first few years of music. I have purchased two intermediate concert items and ordered a set of new books. This will provide valuable material for the Wednesday evening group.

I want to do some serious recruiting from the schools in the area to start a new group on Sunday mornings. Elliot, Toby and I are always in town anyway at St Matthew's and could offer regular classes from 10:30 am until 11:30 am. If we can get a few starters then Obrasso also publish some very good introductory music that would be useful. I would like to begin this new group in term 4 this year. If a few of the teenagers from the main band were also available we may be able to start a viable youth band before the end of 2003.

### **New music**

I want the band to be part of the annual St Matthew's Day celebrations (September 21 this year) and we really need a new collection of hymns. After discussion with Chris, I have ordered a new set of the *Wright and Round* books. These have been republished twice since the edition we own. All instruments are now covered, including glockenspiel, percussion and timpani. Every member will have an individual booklet rather than sharing copies of an incomplete set as happens at present. A full score has also been published, allowing planning of alternative instrumental combinations for different verses.

Albury composer John Ross has written many excellent descant parts for the St Matthew's choir and has agreed to provide a set in keys for Eb and Bb cornets. These alternative high melody lines will add a great sparkle to the traditional arrangements. I will also add some re-harmonisations of a few well-known hymns for use as special last verses. The St Matthew's Day concert is a paid job and will become a regular part of our yearly commitments.

### **Music for 2004**

One obvious way to make our Ballarat pilgrimage easier each year will be to start on the march, own choice and hymn tune before Christmas. If we could debut these at the Bright Autumn Festival it would make our lives much less stressful. We would only have to learn the test piece during June and July. We are lucky this year that the test piece is short (though there are deep musical ideas to master) - next year it may be something larger on the scale of *Glasshouse Sketches*. I have talked to Chris about possible repertoire. I will choose music that make great concert items as well as being challenging enough to present as contest works.

Remember the golden rule: *Relax, don't push, keep breathing!*

Best Regards

Gregory Lewis