

May 13, 2003

Musical Director's Report

Congratulations on some very good work over the past month. I received excellent reports of the ANZAC day performances and the Bright march. It is good to see the band giving such fine efforts during a busy time. It has been especially pleasing to see new players arriving on Wednesday nights. Please make them welcome! Do they all have a copy of *The Sound* CD for inspiration?

The Bright concert went very well. I would like to thank Michael and Athelea O'Sullivan for hosting the Lewis family. A good night's sleep and sumptuous breakfast at the Bright Chalet certainly set us up for a great day. The band played very confidently and can be proud of their contribution to the festivities.

I was particularly pleased with the band's tone. There were many quiet moments during the performance where poor intonation could have ruined the effect, but players listened and adjusted well. This is vital to raising our standard. Everyone must listen to every note and be sure to compensate where necessary to create a smooth sound.

Accurate tuning before a concert certainly helps, but it is the responsibility of every player to ensure that their instrument remains in tune throughout a recital. Instruments go sharp as they warm up and flat as players get tired and everyone needs to be alert to this. If you think you are going out of tune, then fix it! All we needed was a little more bravery from the percussion section. It's almost impossible to play percussion too loud outdoors!

There are still issues of style and balance to be addressed with the livelier numbers, but most of the notes are there. I am looking forward to building a solid 60 minute programme before spring. I would like Wodonga Brass to deliver a regular series of first rate outdoor performances, perhaps one per fortnight, during the next daylight saving period.

I am also keen to play a *Sunday in the Park* in the Albury Botanical Gardens. Will we fit into the bandstand? A well publicised event, perhaps in conjunction with some other community activity could be a winner.

Also, with Sumsion Gardens in the news, has the council planned a serious performing space with room for a good size audience? Bright has such an area, so should Wodonga.

There are also events from time to time in Norieul Park that would benefit from our presence. Can we get hold of some kind of community planning calendar to get notice of these? I am thinking here of *Pets in the Park*, or *Chryslers on the Murray* and other attractions. Maybe the Albury council has such a document. We may have to negotiate with the Albury Band and give them first option on these.

I recall as a boy in the Cessnock band that the committee's agreement with the council included a general grant plus a fee for voluntary public performances (not ANZAC days, Christmas and other civic events). Might we put such a proposal to our council? \$75 per outing in various parks around town might be acceptable to the civic fathers.

I want to get away from the idea that public recitals are special and rare. It would be a wonderful thing if we could play all over the Wodonga area so often that many hundreds of people hear us. We are much more likely to get paid gigs if more of the good citizens of our town know what we can do. The Sumsion Gardens and Oakmont Court gigs were a great start. Lets keep building on this.

Our 2003 repertoire will include many of the pieces played at Bright, plus:

Fanfare for a Festival
Hetty Wainright - Flugel horn solo
Whirlwind – Cornet solo
Impromptu – Contest music
Breezin' Down Broadway – Possible own choice contest piece
Bugler's Holiday

I have ordered more music for consideration, including some film scores and solos for other instruments. I will choose our contest march before the end of May. I also have other alternatives to try for the own choice section.

After the contest we should be in excellent form for a major public concert at \$5 per head. We could play at CCW, ask band members to sell tickets and promote the concert in their work places. It really should be possible to make over \$500. I ran a concert last year at St Matthew's and raised more than this amount.

Another thought just struck me. After my daughter's wedding I now have relatives in Gundagai. It's only a two hour drive and could make a grand day out for the band. I believe that there is some type of band in Gundagai - we could perhaps do a workshop and share a concert afternoon or something for a gold coin donation to cover the bus hire (Or drive ourselves and keep half of the money). I can get widespread, and very cheap, promotion in the local paper for such a project.

Speaking of gold coins, has anyone approached Visy or Uncle Ben's (or anyone who is showing a profit) for some serious sponsorship? We really need a 4 valve Bb tuba, and some more percussion, In a perfect world we would have a Vibraphone, new xylophone, TamTam, and a new set of real timpani. A few extra cornets might not go astray either. Total cost in this paragraph is around \$50,000. I know that John Drage always wished for similar items. We can't afford it, we need to ask someone who can.

Could we also send all the big businesses a letter advertising our services for outdoor Christmas concerts this year? Company picnics are exactly where we should be in the summer time, earning some money. School fetes are also important. A letter to all schools may attract a job or two.

Do we advertise? Can we afford something in the Border Mail during the warmer months referring readers to our web site? On-line visitors could see our fees, our repertoire, and maybe even hear some of our music (played by Black Dyke and Cory or course).

Could we produce a flashy colour brochure with images of talented musicians in splendid uniforms entertaining the grateful multitudes, plus fees and contact details. We could hand these to schools, churches, sporting clubs, tourist organisations and anyone else who might need entertainment for a special event. And not just in the Border area – what about playing next to the submarine in Holbrook, or in a park in Wangaratta? We should promote ourselves to every council within 100 kilometres, offering to be part of whatever special events they have planned. It works for Bright, why not a few other areas?

With membership on the rise and a general feeling that things are going well, this might be the year to really go for a high profile approach. I will help by choosing crowd pleasing numbers. People like to hear tunes they already know: movie themes; TV themes; Broadway tunes; and popular songs. I am also pleased to be in a position to promote the great music of the brass band movement itself. I will continue to include selections from the finest British band music when they are within our musical grasp.

Best regards

Gregory Lewis