

Rochester Rhythm

The New Horizons Newsletter

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Our profile is upbeat

Greetings and Salutations

Here are some words to go with your music. We invite you to read them but not try to sing them. The package isn't very pretty. It was composed on a seven-year-old Macintosh LC III using ClarisWorks, which probably says it all.

But the intent is honorable, hopefully helping us to get better acquainted and perhaps a little more cohesive.

We played with titles, including Rochester Rhapsody (which we first favored), Rochester Refrain, Rochester Rondo and Rochester Recital. You can see we like alliteration. But, appropriately, we were moved the most by Rochester Rhythm, at least for the first issue. Other suggestions would be appreciated.

If you like this attempt well enough to continue, we'd like you to consider volunteering to make it better. One suggestion is for a reporter to represent each section and gather news of interest, musical or otherwise, about members in that section. An artist or two could make a major contribution, too.

Criticism, congratulations, condolences but mostly comment are welcome by Ed Mizma, Dick Sitts and Cliff Smith. Remember, though, we're very sensitive musicians.

We 130-something members of the world's first and largest New Horizons Band average 70 years of age (the median is 69). Our youngest is 32, our oldest, 85 plus.

We've been with the band an average of 4.8 years, and 29 of us who joined during the first year of 1991 are still with us.

This snapshot comes from those nearly-forgotten questionnaires filled out in the last millennium. The return rate was impressive, more than 95 percent.

Besides the Concert Band, we participate on average in one other New Horizons group, such as the Wind Ensemble, Dance Band or Clarinet Ensemble. (Red, Green, Gold and Silver bands weren't entered into the equation.)

Of the 126 who responded, 65 of us said we also play or sing in musical aggregations outside of New Horizons, including community bands and orchestras, church choirs and handbell ensembles, barbershop quartets and a klezmer band.

The average age when we first played an instrument was 16, but 17 of us didn't begin until we were at least 65. Fifty of us started playing again, after a long hiatus from the teen years, at age 60 or older.

Fifty-six of us play at least one other instrument besides the one we play in the New Horizons Band. Thirty-nine of the 56 at least dabble at the piano, by far the most frequently
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mentioned second instrument. Others range from the ukulele to the violin, recorder, cello, vibraphone and Native American flute.

Private lessons are being taken by 42 of us, and all of us, whether we're taking lessons or not, say we practice at home an average of one hour and seven minutes daily for 4.6 days a week.

We immerse ourselves in music, averaging 10 (non-N.H.) concerts annually and listening to an average 12 hours of music weekly at home or in the car.

No finé for New Horizons

The beat goes on and on and on for Eastman School of Music Prof. Roy Ernst and the New Horizons program he founded in January 1991.

Thousands of seasoned citizens are playing today in 52 New Horizons bands in 26 states, from Connecticut to California, as well as in Canada. The states with the most NH bands are Texas and Illinois, with five each.

And it all started with an invitation in several Rochester area publications to attend an informational meeting. The goal was to enroll about 30 students, but nearly 50 showed up, and the rest is history still being made

Those tubas are woodshedders

Our tuba players practice at home an average hour and 15 minutes daily for six days a week, tops among all sections in our New Horizons Band. But they beat our trumpeters by only five minutes a day.

Our bassoonists turn out for the most concerts, averaging 19 a year. The tubas find time to go to an average 17, when they're not practising, while French horn players average 16.

Bassoonists also averaged the youngest, 6 1/2 years, when they first played an instrument. Our trombonists were the oldest, averaging 34 years.

Our percussionists have been with us the longest, an average 6.7 years. But the trumpet section has the most charter members, 7, two more than the alto saxophonists.

Trombonists average highest in the number of New Horizons groups they play with, 3. One hundred percent of our euphonium players (six of six) play or sing in non-New Horizon groups. Seventy-five percent (3 of 4) of the oboes do.

Oboes have the highest percentage taking private lessons (75%). Flutists comprise the largest number, 10, followed by trumpets and clarinets with 9. Oboes also listen to the most music, 19 hours weekly; French horns are next, 17.



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Our music is 'mysterious, maddening and fun'

"Fun" and "relaxing" are two of the nouns used most often by players to describe the satisfaction they receive from their New Horizons experience.

But many also get a lot more descriptive in the questionnaires they returned. For example:

"I love the feeling of the group coming together, the sum being greater than all its parts, the sense of greater human possibilities."

"I find it relaxing, stimulating, inspiring, awesome! It's also fun."

"Great satisfaction. I could not live without it. It pushes all my buttons. It keeps me flexible and breathing."

"It stirs my soul! It brings me some of my most profound feelings, as well as some my most joyful ones ... There's also a kind of camaraderie of creation as we learn and try to perfect new music."

"Playing something well creates optimism, self-esteem and hopefulness."

"It's a constant friend and companion."

"I love being in the middle of all this music. It brings some structure to my life."

"The New Horizons Band has been a powerful source of inspiration, learning and friendship. I find the music uplifting, relaxing and inspiring."



"It's an important, even indispensable part of my existence."

"I miss it badly when there is a break. It's my 'club.'"

"It's great to play with a group after so many years! After practice, I feel the same 'high' that I feel after a half-hour on my treadmill."

"Music gets my feet going and harmonizes my soul."

"There's the satisfaction of personal growth, and a continuation of daily discipline, which is apt to lessen with age."

"It's knowing that I still have what it takes to make a joyful noise."

"Having suffered a major depression, I found the band to be a great therapeutic aid in my recovery, and the only activity I could continue during my illness."

"I'm continually amazed that I can keep learning and improving."

"I like the beauty of the sound, especially when we pay attention to the dynamics of a piece."

"I like closing the gap between what I want to happen and what I can do at any given moment. Music is exciting, complicated, mysterious, maddening, fun"

"I get a social satisfaction from associating with others who share similar goals and interests."

Casey at the bat-on: His likes and dislikes



Hey, the jokes are on us, so laugh!

Our New Horizons Band is doing "very well" in four major areas, says Casey G. Springstead, who conducted us while working for his master's at the Eastman School of Music. They are:

* "Very strong leadership," which is aware of the group's potential and "committed to creating an extremely valuable music program in the Rochester area."

* "Excellent goals," with "a superb balance of musical experiences and social growth."

* A band content, particularly in rehearsals, which is "generally very suitable for the members," music that is not heard much any more but has a "special meaning" to the members.

* An "advocacy for music education and lifelong learning," which is "a model for "any community performing ensemble in the country."

Springstead, who is now a music teacher and band director at Irondequoit's Dake School, recommends these "modifications and improvements":

* A brief training program for teachers about "sensitivity to seniors' needs, learning styles and abilities."

* At least one lesson weekly, privately or in small groups, for students just beginning an instrument.

* More adequate rehearsal space, with an emphasis on small rooms for lessons and sectionals.

* An additional effort to balance the cost of rehearsal space with that of conductors' compensation.

* "Add-on" opportunities, such as private lessons and coached chamber music, to supplement the current package of group lessons and band.

Don't take this seriously, please. How do you tell if the stage is level? The drummer is drooling out of *both* sides of his mouth.

Sign outside an Eastman practice room: "Gone Chopin. Bach in a minuet."

What do you get if Bach dies and is reincarnated as twins? A pair of Re-Bachs

A critic is like a eunuch: He knows exactly how it ought to be done.

What's the difference between a lawn mower and a tenor sax? You can tune a lawnmower. And, the neighbors care if you don't return it.

How do you get an electric guitarist to turn down? Put sheet music in front of him.

How do you get a trumpet player to play *ff*? Write *mp* on the part.

How many conductors does it take to change a light bulb? One, but, then, who's really watching.

Proposed country song title: "I Wouldn't Take You in a Dog Fight Even If I Knew You Could Win."

How do you get two piccolo players to play in unison? Shoot one.

Why is a string bass better than a cello? The string bass burns longer.

Why did they say the pianist had fingers like lightning? They never struck the same place twice.

We stay in tune in June

Classes end May 25 at the Unitarian Church.

But full-band rehearsals will continue at Temple Beth-El on May 30 and June 1, 13, 20 and 27, from 9 to 11 a.m.

