

April 26, 2008. I was at Showcase Theater Saturday afternoon for the live, HD broadcast of the Metropolitan Opera production of Donizetti's "La Fille du Regiment" (The Daughter of the Regiment). (This played at the Quality 16 theater as well.) As far as I am concerned, the Metropolitan Opera doing this movie theater live broadcast activity across the country is the smartest marketing move any major arts organization has ever done. Listening to the Met on the radio or watching on TV is good, of course, and actually going to the Met (which I have once) is great, but the camera work and the sound and the big screen--along with the perfection (in all respects) of almost any Met performance--is, for my taste, THE way to experience opera. My only disappointment was in noticing that, in the local audience for this performance, I was in the youngest fourth of those in attendance. Opera, and "classical" music in general, and concert band music (including that our YCB), MUST attract a younger audience to survive.

April 21, 2008. My weekend professional development/live entertainment included a trip to the Wharton Center at MSU to see the 2004 Tony award winning musical, "Avenue Q." (It's a cute, sort of muppet show with "adult" themes.) I also had a chance to hear the Ypsilanti Symphony Orchestra and was glad to hear a "plug" for a summer concert by YCB.

April 15, 2008. Don Chaffin (percussion), recently retired UM professor, has been selected to receive the American Association of Engineering Societies National Engineering Award, which will be presented in ceremonies next month. Congratulations, Don!

We recently received this message from Mike Kirby, director of the Whitmore Lake High School Band: "On behalf of the WLHS Band and myself, I want to thank you and tell you what a great experience the rehearsals and concert was for our kids. The student felt very much accepted into the group and were the recipients of a rewarding musical experience. They are looking forward to doing it again if the opportunity comes about. I personally am grateful to have had the opportunity to conduct the YCB. It was rewarding and just plain fun at the same time. The YCB. . . is to be commended for the quality of literature the band performs. Holst's "Second Suite" is an undertaking at any level, and "Valdres" is one of my favorite European marches. The band sounded great."

Duke Ellington wrote three major religious works. I was in New Orleans over the past weekend and heard the St. Louis Cathedral Jazz Orchestra and the St. Louis Cathedral Concert Choir present "The Best of the Sacred Concerts"--selections from the three Ellington works. It was a very, very good "big band," with prominent local professional musicians (such as Delfeayo Marsalis on 2nd trombone), with Charmaine Neville (from a prominent New Orleans musical family) as one of the vocal soloists, and with other prominent soloists (including a tap dancer).

April 10, 2008. We had a great time tonight playing for and with the WLHS Band--three numbers from them, three from YCB, then three together! Lots of logistics involved, but a valuable experience for both bands. Looking forward to doing this again with WL and other middle- and high school bands. Many band leaders getting materials together for Monday's monthly Board meeting. YCB President Meagan Bush had a baby this week. Congratulations!

April 8, 2008. What a great rehearsal we had tonight, especially the part with the two bands combined! The WLHS students have obviously given a lot of attention to their parts in recent days, and it shows. They are also handling real well sitting and playing with older musicians. YCB members keep telling me how much fun they are having playing with the younger musicians. I'm glad we are doing this. Should be a great program on Thursday.

April 5, 2008. At the Association of Concert Bands convention in Corning, New York. The Convention Band concert was well received by a large audience of local people.

The final concert was by the host band, the Corning Area Community Concert Band. This band included what appeared to be middle/high school kids, but they played well. The program was sort of a strange event. First, the dress: the men were in white dress shirts and long ties (no jackets); women in all black, except for the two nuns in their dark habits; however, the conductor was in white tie and tails.

The third piece in the program was a new "ACB March" being performed for the first time, conducted by the composer, John Edmondson. A guest conductor then did "Red Rhythm Valley,"

jazz/big band piece based on "Red River Valley." Several members of the band soloed in this. The group then performed the "Harmonica Wizard" march by Sousa, originally scored for a large band of harmonica players and re-scored for this concert for band and three solo harmonicas.

The program concluded with two numbers by professional trombone soloist Harry Watters (U.S. Army), a dixieland number, then a big band type "Flight of the Bumblebee." Watters is easily the most talented trombonist I've ever heard. Very outgoing personality to go with it.

April 4, 2008. At the Association of Concert Bands convention in Corning, New York. Heard the Chesapeake Silver Cornet Brass Band. A great program, well done, of a couple of original pieces for brass band and a lot of transcriptions. Printed program included, as YCB's should as well, "member of the Association of Concert Bands." Also program noted that they get money from grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and from the Delaware Division of the Arts.

Then heard the Honeoye Falls Community Concert Band. This is a group of about the same size and instrumentation as YCB, celebrating its 20th anniversary. This was a VERY dramatic program of Festive Overture, Molly on the Shore, American Overture for Band, American Salute, Variations on a Korean Folk Song, etc., with a new piece "Into the Raging River." Everything was well done and played at a rapid pace. However, this was almost too much drama, even for someone who likes a lot of "loud and fast" pieces. Dress: white shirt, black pants. Average age younger than the usual band on the convention program.

Convention band is rehearsing an interesting program. Florentiner March. It was explained that this is a "miniature Rossini opera." Of course! I had just never realized that before--townspeople, villain, hero, etc. Makes the interpretation all that much more fun. Chester Overture--much more symbolism here about Revolutionary War than I had realized before. . . soldiers, gunshots (21-gun salute). Variations on a Shaker Melody--Copland, from "Appalachian Spring." Copland did his own band arrangement of this piece. Lots of Americana symbolism here as well.

Hands Across the Sea, Sousa. Doing extremes with the dynamics makes this a very exciting march! An American Elegy. A real tear jerker when you know all the symbolism behind this music and the Columbine tragedy. Easy to get "choked up" at passages with special meanings. A good piece to use in connection with any memorial. Use of a fragment of Columbine HS alma mater really hits me: "we are Columbine, we are ALL Columbine." Conductor McMurray had close connections with the school, its band, its present/former band students, and the composer and it clearly has very, very special meanings for him. It was an excellent exercise in working through a wide variety of nuances in the music to bring out all that the composer intended. An American Pageant. Written for U.S. Marine Band and it spares nothing in terms of complexities as a wide range of American patriotic songs are weaved together.

Heard the Repasz Band. I had heard this group two years before at the ACB convention in Williamsport, which they hosted. It was founded in 1831, yes 177 years of continuous operation. Concert dress: a uniform of black pants, white dress shirt, solid black tie, grey jacket with piping on sleeves. It was an OK program, although the conductor is still excessively flamboyant in his conducting, to the point of distraction from the music being performed. Somebody shoot me if I ever start conducting that way.

Heard a wonderful concert by East Winds Symphonic Band, from suburban Pittsburgh. This group is about the same size and instrumentation as YCB. They played a great program under conductor Susan Sands. Dress: black for women, tux for men. The 1st clarinet player was also the announcer; he did a good job and used no notes. In this band, the bass drum was located about where we ordinarily have timpani--made a great sight line between conductor and player. This program of music--we have to get and perform many of these titles!

I picked up some printed programs from other bands that were there among the exhibits for giveaway. Lone Star Band of Houston area. Co-host for 2009 Convention, April 15-19. Composer Robert Sheldon will conduct the convention band. Houston Concert Band, sponsors of the Houston Trumpet Festival. Houston Area Community Music Festival--a Sunday with six band concerts by area adult bands, concluding with a Festival All-Star Band (selected members of each of the bands). All concerts were/are on Saturday or Sunday, something we should consider.

West Michigan Winds. Concerts on Saturday or Sunday this season. Road trip to perform in Kalamazoo in February. They invited the North Oakland Concert Band to be part of the concert in April. This Band toured internationally in 1996, 1999, and 2005. They have played for ACB convention and won Sudler Scroll award in 2005. They sponsor an annual scholarship and the winner plays a solo with the band. They list occupations of members in printed program. They have a "Band Aides" organization, and include the names of these non-playing volunteers in the printed program. A Board member is the coordinator of this volunteer group of 17 people. The Board consists of president, past president, vice president, treasurer, secretary, personnel manger, 4 other members; chair of publicity, chair program and web manager, band aide coordinator, business manager and conductor/music director. They are affiliated with Muskegon Community College. Lots of great ideas for YCB here.

April 3, 2008. At the Association of Concert Bands convention in Corning, New York. Heard the Hornell Area Woodwinds, a group of 49 players, who were OK, but not terribly exciting. However, 23 of the members of this band are individual members of the Association of Concert Bands. Lots of ACB leadership from this organization. Heard the Perinton Concert Band. This group sounds much like YCB, with similar instrumentation. The program included a couple of marches, "Wrong Note Rag," a show tune ("Wicked"), etc. This band has these features that I would very much like to see in YCB:

1. They list the occupations of players in the printed program. These include such as "dog trainer" and "auto technician."
2. They have many more than we do of present/former teachers of music.
3. They are only two years older than YCB. However, they have performed at the NY State School Music Association winter conference, NY State Band Directors Association MENC All-Eastern Division, this is their second appearance at an ACB convention, they have performed at the Boston Festival of Bands.
4. They made a CD for sale in 1996, another in 2001, and a third in 2006 (holiday music).
5. They performed a work on this program that they had commissioned from the conductor of the Rochester Pops Orchestra. The commissioning was for the 30th anniversary of the group.

Went to a clinic session presented by and then sat in rehearsals (playing 3rd trombone) under conductor Allan McMurray of the University of Colorado. McMurry is amazing! He is an excellent public speaker, he makes extraordinary use of analogies, he is a dynamic conductor, and he works extremely well with a 137 piece band. He is both very witty and tremendously inspirational—I kept getting choked up over his tales of the tragedy at Columbine High School, etc.

April 2, 2008. At the convention of the Association of Concert Bands in Corning, New York. I heard the U.S. Military Academy (West Point) band, a group of 47 players. They played (very well!) several things we have done in past: His Honor, the Holst First Suite, Black Horse Troop, and Them Basses. They played a suite that was a medley of service songs similar to "Armed Forces Salute." They also played several that were very well done but that I don't consider appropriate for YCB. However, two great ideas: (1) pull "Journey Through Orion" from files and play it. (2) See if there is a commercial arrangement of "Mary Poppins." It's been 42 years since movie came out; no wonder I had forgotten about such great songs as "Spoon Full of Sugar" and "Supercalifagalistic."