

June 15, 2008. Off and on, for almost the entire 30-year life of the program, I've listened to "Prairie Home Companion" on National Public Radio. But I'd never seen a live performance--until yesterday! PHC broadcast live from Hill Auditorium yesterday evening. I had tried to get tickets when they first went on sale some weeks ago--but they sold out before the on-line sales were even activated. So I was standing in line--#19--when the box office opened to sell the "returns." (First in line was YCB's Emily Hildebrandt (flute) and her husband!). They had 13 sets of tickets for sale at that point. I put my name (#3 in line) on a "wait list" for "just-before-the-performance" returns--and made it this time, with a good aisle seat in the mezzanine. This was lots of fun--and really interesting to see how smoothly this live show ran. Amazing how much of the show Garrison Keillor did from memory, without notes! Quite a showman!

June 13, 2008. Some entertainment notes: Last weekend's production of "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum," produced by the Ann Arbor Civic Theater in the Lydia Mendelssohn Theater, was a lot of fun. YCB's Eric Walters played string bass in the orchestra. The recently-released "Indiana Jones" movie has received mixed reviews. If you don't like it, close your eyes--there's the usual great sound track and music. I'm playing--for part of the rehearsals and concerts this summer--with the Ann Arbor Civic Band. I don't get to play nearly enough these days, and it's lots of fun!

June 10, 2008. It has been an extraordinary year of accomplishments, perhaps never before equaled in the history of the Ypsilanti Community Band. The [2007-08 Conductor's Annual Report](#), presented to the Band Board this evening, summarizes what we've accomplished over the past year.

June 4, 2008. Recently I had the opportunity to spend 10 days in Italy (including the Vatican and San Marino). Many thanks to Jim Wagner, Pat Padilla, and Paul Vaughan for keeping YCB things going in good order (Clarkston concert, Memorial Day concert, Pep Band at Dexter-Ann Arbor Run) while I was gone. I had some good musical adventures, including hearing street musicians, touring the marvelous Teatro di San Carlo opera house in Naples, hearing the organs of St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican and of the Duomo in Florence, and seeing/hearing a great performance of *La Traviata* in Rome.

However, the biggest musical excitement for me was seeing and hearing 20 German "town bands," all dressed in folk costume uniforms, of 24-40 members each, march onto St. Peter's Square in the Vatican (all of them playing at the same time as they marched in!) and then giving a combined band concert. Some 600 musicians who played quite well! I didn't recognize any of the music, except for the last piece, the European Union anthem (based on the theme from the 4th movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony). The next morning--a Sunday--I was back in St. Peter's Square for the noon Papal appearance. Here came the same bands again, except marching in from a different direction. This time their combined concert was for an audience of about 20,000 people. The Pope's appearance was 20-25 minutes long, and he stopped in the middle to let the combined bands play for him. Quite a nice event!