

Orangeville's Community Band is thriving

By CONSTANCE SCRAFIELD-DANBY

Columnist

Community bands are a centuries-old tradition in towns and villages throughout the world. It's a simple matter of people who love to play music but have no group or focus specifically through which to exercise their passion coming together, like living cells forming an organism.

One way or another, they find a director who collects suitable music and suggests venues where they might perform.

Once they start to play for any group of other people, many of whom cannot play but love to listen, some of whom also like to play and might therefore offer to join the band, they become public property.

Usually, the happy result is rapid growth and a mixed bag of individuals

in age, profession and tastes.

In many ways, it is odd that Orangeville has not had a community band for decades. However, last year, that gap was finally resolved when a few lonely musicians asked John Wervers to take on the role of music director and conductor to a newly formed band. At the time there were about 10 or a dozen of them. Now, there are nearly 50.

John Wervers is a co-op teacher at Westside Secondary School, working with students to place them as co-op employees with "community partners" in Orangeville. Before he took on this position, he was a music teacher at Westside, Orangeville District Secondary and Centre Dufferin District High. Music has always been important to him. He studied orchestral conducting as his post graduate work,

travelling to Europe for his studies.

The range of players in the band's second year varies in age from high school students to retired men and women. They come from various lines of work. All live in the Orangeville area.

As the numbers of people wanting to be involved grew, it was decided to form an executive to run the business of the band in a straight and normal way. Stan Elliotson, well known for his contribution to the music scene in Orangeville, is President, presiding over his fellow members of treasurer, marketing director etcetera, while Mr. Wervers continues as musical director. From this organised approach to the running of the band, they have been able to function as an integral part of the Orangeville community.

Generally, one of the

prime self-imposed functions of such a group is to mentor youth, encouraging young people to learn to play musical instruments and become involved in musical events. With this in mind, one of their planned events is their "Music for Youth", with two dates scheduled this coming year on April 23 and 30. To these performances, they invite elementary bands to join them. The youthful bands play on their own and then the Community Band (of adults) joins them to play together. The idea and hope are that the children will find the whole experience so delightful that they will be excited about continuing with their musical studies.

A problem for elementary studies, though, as Mr. Wervers outlined it, is that instruments are not available to students as part of their standard education. In other words, elementary schools do not, generally, own musical instruments. This means that parents have to buy or rent instruments. Even with a contribution from the boards of education, the cost is not always at a level every family can afford.

Back to the Orangeville Community Band, made up, as Mr. Wervers assured me, of "a wonderful bunch of people", they are always happy to welcome new members. At the moment, the band is an all wind and percussion ensemble. Even a person who does not have an instrument is welcomed, with the note that, very

often, an instrument can be found, on long term loan for example.

The band rehearses Thursday evenings at Westside, for a couple of hours. While it's only in its infancy, really, there are still ambitions for performances and there is already a record of performance.

They played in a remembrance service with the Legion Branch 233, along with the requisite bag pipes at the Orangeville Baptist Church in early November.

They played Christmas music at the senior centres in Orangeville and the Orangeville Mall last Saturday and on Sunday had their big concert of the season, titled The Joy of Christmas, at the Salvation Army's New Hope Community Church on Riddell Road.

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