



Words and Music

Music is Just Another Language

By Ken Eller, piping adjudicator for the Piper's and Pipe Band Society of Ontario, the Eastern U.S. Pipe Band Association, and the Royal Scottish Pipe Band Association.
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Imagine a world where no written languages like English existed, a system replaced by bagpipe music alone. The alphabet would be the notes of the chanter; low G to high A.

Count them! There would be only nine letters to our musical language, which would be easier than English by a wide margin. We would have to “sing” in musical words consisting of one, two, three and perhaps four syllables, again not unlike the English language. In addition, we would need sentences and phrases with comma punctuation and periods to signify the end of a sentence.

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Let’s add paragraphs to complete our paragraphs to complete our musical practice the language of music. I don’t want to delve into the history of the oral method for understanding Ceol Mor; I think most of us are already aware that for the past four centuries to the present, pipe music (piobaireachd) has been passed on using a mouth music method called Canntaraichd.

In the simplest form, the syllables and words (or lyrics) are conveyed using the melody of the tune as the medium. In short, to learn effectively from this system, a piper must have excellent audio skills – must be an audio learner.

Welcome to the 1950s onward. Learning skills began to change. The computer, DVD, videos for downloading, movies shown in the classroom, the Internet and browsing – all have contributed to a society gradually shifting from audio to visual learning methods. We formerly used nothing but audio devices – the radio, the gramophone, the record player, the wireless, the telephone – but now communication definitely becomes more visual – SKYPE – iPhone and Android apps – video games that combine visual with the audio. You “get the picture” ... pun intended!

Well it’s time to upgrade our learning skills. Fundamentally, in order to learn, you must understand what has to be learned in the first place!

A Brief History

In 2005, I launched a teaching website called The Captain’s Corner, found at <http://www.thecaptainscorner.com>

At the time I was teaching friends up in Juneau, Alaska. Spending a least two trips a year there for about 10 days each, I was realizing that between visits, progress could have been better. The idea occurred to me to set up online lessons that would motivate and instruct in the months between visits. But the

problem existed – how could I convert an audio lesson in person into a visual lesson from a remote source in another part of the country, using the Internet, realizing at the time there was no form of SKYPE.

The idea came to me, as I sang a tune with the music in front of me, that I was really “pulsing” the strong notes of the score. That is, I was using volume and duration to accent or emphasize the dotted notes and quarter notes (and perhaps beat notes) of a tune in simple time. This allowed me to identify the strong pulses of the music. Further review revealed another type of “pulse” – neither strong nor weak, but rather even (as in two 1/8th notes – tied together in one beat). Inspection of so many tunes in simple time signatures like 4/4, 3/4, 2/4, and strathspeys revealed that there were only three basic types of pulses.

Bazinga! Why not identify these pulses by using vertical lines in the musical score. In effect I was placing these lines, which I named pulse lines, sometimes after a single note, two notes, three and even four notes. One would quickly draw the parallel as I sung the tune that I was in fact breaking my music up into the WORDS – words with one, two, three and four syllables.

Further reflecting upon singing, I realized I was taking breaths at the two-bar locations in the tune, just like a piece of poetry, and I was stopping at the end of the part. This introduced the concept of punctuation, as in comma and

period, into my music, along with two-bar phrasing.

The model resembles a piece of poetry. Each part represents a stanza of the poem and two or four parts become the complete story of the poem. DONE!

In the end, I realized I was merely interpreting the oral lessons of my teacher, John Wilson, and making them visual and visible on paper.

Now let's put this into practice by setting up rules to govern different time signatures. Finally a system of pulsing a tune allows us to see the words and sentence structure before we start to play.

The Benefits

The benefits became obvious:

- The words became clear.
- You appreciate 1, 2, 3 and 4 syllable passages that have to be pronounced correctly.
- Reading the music is easier and faster.
- You understand the score.
- You play the music correctly the first time.
- You memorize faster with this understanding.
- You play in time.
- You hold all notes the correct duration.
- You see that the beat structure is not sufficient to play good music.
- You realize that certain notes are strong pulses.
- You readily see that shorter notes

connect to strong pulses – hence become passing notes.

- You see the two-bar phrasing in the tunes.
- The technique necessary to play a tune well is identified inside each pulse or word.
- Your technique improves.
- It is easy to better articulate the technique.

This method became my foundation for reading and playing music at tempo, in time and correctly from the beginning. I never use the words “hold that note longer” any more with my students. They SEE it in the pulsing. They BLOW through the pulsed notes and put spaces into their music. They don't jump phrases.

Believe me, this has cured a plethora of learning difficulties. It is efficient and saves much time in the end. Imagine a pipe section where all played the tunes the same way from the beginning. No more would the Pipe Major be frustrated with having to correct players week after week after week. . .

Let me steal a thought from Victor Wooten, the bass player with Béla Fleck and the Flecktones. He has the best book available for understanding the priorities in music. In “The Music Lesson,” he identifies the notes as the least important aspect of our music, and he is correct. If you learn your music note by note, God help you. This is an impediment to the learning process.

We speak in words, not letters, so why would you not play music the same way - in words or pulses.

This lends credibility to the process of pulsing. Now let's set down our rules and apply them to a test piece.

To keep it simple, I will use the 3/4 march, *The Shoals of Herring*, an old folk song in the repertoire of many, including the Clancy Brothers and Tommy Makem.

The Shoals of Herring

Retreat

The image shows a musical score for the piece 'The Shoals of Herring'. It consists of four staves of music, each with a treble clef and a 3/4 time signature. The music is written in a simple, rhythmic style. Above the notes on each staff, there are small vertical lines (pulses) that indicate the timing of the notes. The word 'Retreat' is written above the first staff. The title 'The Shoals of Herring' is centered above the staves.

Music is a language much like English. The understanding of a passage is in the words, not the individual letters. In music, pulsing is a method of determining the important "musical words." This will allow you to put "space" or good pronunciation into your music.

Here are some rules to follow for pulsing. Strictly adhere to them and you will play all tunes well: pulsed, with good phrasing, rhythmic technique and in time.

The following rules will allow you to successfully pulse tunes written in simple time. The pulse lines may be moved in any way by a player to adequately pronounce a larger or smaller passage in a different manner best suited for the tune. Remember, the pulse line is merely a guide to assist reading, understanding and playing.

Rules: Place a pulse line after

1. Every $\frac{1}{4}$ note



1

2. Every dotted note (dotted $\frac{1}{8}$ th note)



1 &

3. Every pair of $\frac{1}{8}$ th notes



1 - 2

The Shoals of Herring

Retreat



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Now put the two bar phrases in:

A **B**

The Shoals of Herring

The image shows a musical score for 'The Shoals of Herring' in 3/4 time. It consists of four staves. The first two staves are for the melody, and the last two are for the accompaniment. Two phrases are highlighted with blue brackets: 'A' covers the first two bars of the melody, and 'B' covers the next two bars. The word 'Retreat' is written above the first staff. The title 'The Shoals of Herring' is centered above the score.

Method

1. Play the pulses one at a time, taking a breath on each pulse line – make this a "stop sign." This puts spaces between your words.
2. Play continuously with no breaths through the pulse lines. Take as much time blowing through the pulse lines as needed to appreciate the individual words of the tune.
3. Gradually reduce the amount of time blowing through the pulse lines until the tune is continuous and aligned to the metronome.

If possible, attempt to sing each pulse to yourself and attempt to internalize the music as you go. When playing, if you recognize a pulse where you are having technical difficulty, hone that piece of technique to perfection by creating tune specific drills and then proceed on.

Some players may wish to put "rhythm counters" into their music. Looking at the first phrase, we might get something like the diagram on the next page.

If you have studied your piping from the John Cairn's series of tutor books, then these rhythm counters will be natural to you. The premise here is that you are looking more at pronouncing the words than playing the alphabet. After all, every player can play notes – in this case mostly low A, C, E and high A, our fundamental arpeggio for so many tunes.

And finally, many of you will see value in this method of understanding our music. Others will see it as a mirror of their own techniques. After all, successful players must encompass some form of seeing the language of our music.

1 | & 1 | 1-2 | 1-2 | 1 | & 1 |

The Shoals of Herring

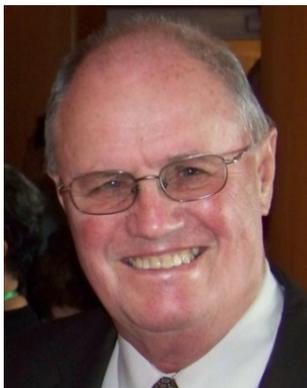
Retreat

Written by Tom Foley (WSPBA) and Ken Eller (WSPBA)

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Fundamentals of Competition: Or How to Make the Judges Love Your Competition Sets

By Tom Foley, WUSPBA Drumming and Ensemble Adjudicator, and Commissioner of Drumming Education, tmfoley@sbcglobal.net



A recent WUSPBA newsletter presented a very comprehensive and most

welcome overview of the assessment protocol employed by the Music Board in the placement of bands in the various grades. This type of educational information is extremely valuable to the continuing growth of WUSPBA and its membership.

With that in mind, the following article is intended to assist our lower-grade bands. The topics discussed are, however, potentially applicable to bands at all levels and, I believe, worthy of re-examination and consideration.

Having been privileged to act as an adjudicator for both drumming and ensemble for many years, and having heard some otherwise good performances damaged by basic "misunderstandings," for want of a better word, there are some competition fundamentals that need to be well understood.

These are fundamentals that will lead to more settled performances and create a good impression with adjudicators.

The Music

Pipe band music is, as we know, definitely different -- different sound, different rhythms, different dynamics and so on. There is a natural vitality about the music, and unless all players understand this and concentrate, that natural vitality can easily be lost or improperly presented.

A perfect example of this lost vitality regularly appears in Quick March Medley two-four or four-four selections where the pulse from the bass drum is reduced to a two-in-a-bar, or sometimes one-in-a-bar beat, producing an uncomfortable "plodding" feeling. This is very easy to correct by employing a strong-weak-medium-weak pulse. A significant improvement in the swing of the music will result from this simple change. Six-eight tunes also get a major lift from the same method.

In recent years, the RSPBA in Scotland introduced the MAP (Musical Appreciation and Presentation) program for lower-grade competitions in a deliberate attempt to reinforce the basic pipe band fundamentals. A list of appropriate and required tunes was published. "Back in the day", such tunes were often referred to as "Kilt Swingers." You get the picture, I'm sure.

Another major "vitality sapper" arises from playing too slowly, or too quickly. At the lowest grade levels, it can be a significant achievement to field

a band and succeed in just getting through the performance. However, it must be kept in mind that even the simplest pieces of music need to be presented properly. Concentration is required to get the most out of any piece. Playing too slowly (or too quickly) can, and frequently does, create difficulties in ensemble performance when, for example, the drummers are struggling to play material that was perhaps composed for a different tempo.

At the risk of stating the obvious, it is absolutely essential that the pipe major and lead drummer are agreed on the tempo to be played and that the entire band (the ensemble) has that tempo ingrained by playing together at every possible opportunity.

At practice and at the contest field, pipes and drums need to play more together. Even when pipes are being tuned, the drum corps should play along instead of just standing around or playing in another area. Try to keep in mind that a band is one unit and not three separate entities, i.e. pipes, snares and mid-section.

Introductions

Getting off to a solid start is a great soother of nerves and there is really no substitute for repetitive practicing of attacks on the march. This is true at every level of competition and has a great bearing on what comes afterward. Standing behind their clipboards, adjudicators are very attuned to how well the drums execute the opening rolls or how cleanly and accurately the pipes strike in.

There are other simple considerations worth mention as well.

It is not uncommon to observe drummers (and pipers, too) walking out of step with each other or out of time with the tempo called by the pipe major. This makes a clean set of opening rolls difficult to achieve. Give yourself some space so that you do not get jammed up with the players in front (it happens). Practice marching into the circle with someone observing. It will help keep everyone together.

Frequently the bass and tenor opening beats are not in sync with each other, resulting in an untidy-sounding introduction. If the tenors are assigned to beat on the three pace rolls, they need to be spot-on. Drummers need to keep in mind that the pipers are reliant on them for a steady opening pulse. This is one of the easier things to fix, and once it is mastered, it rarely becomes an issue again.

Often the tempo of the opening tune will drop (or speed up) immediately following the three-pace rolls. In some cases this is due to the pipe corps settling on a tempo at which they feel comfortable -- or perhaps the drum corps is the culprit. Either way, the adjudicator will likely note this as a flaw in the ensemble performance.

Awareness and Focus

Immediately prior to the start of the performance, every player must be focused and concentrating on the opening bars of the music. There should be silence with everyone "switched on." Each player must be aware of not only his or her own playing, but everyone

else's as well. Throughout the performance, the pipe major and lead drummer should have eye contact.

Be aware of your surroundings but concentrate on your own playing. Don't be distracted. Above all, don't allow your own mistake or another person's mistake to rattle you. If that happens, chances are that a "domino" effect will begin, with the result that the overall performance suffers. It is possible that an adjudicator may not have heard the initial mistake.

Placement

Pay attention to how players are placed in the band. If the spacing is too large (say, in a small band), the stronger-blowing pipers will be heard more clearly, creating an unbalanced sound. The same is true of drummers, especially where some drummers tend to face toward the lead drummer. In that case, a mix of sound from top and bottom heads is projected, often with less-than-desirable results. A spacing of twelve to fifteen inches apart is a good guide.

The pipers who stand next to the drummers are very important, as the rest of the band takes a cue from their position when forming the circle. Trying for a "wall of sound" right round the band is an excellent goal. If the players are set up too far apart from each other, or if there is a clear division between the pipes and drums, that goal is very difficult to achieve with any consistency.

Sound

Think of the band as a wheel with a hub and spokes where the bass drum is the hub. To get the balanced effect you need, try to have the pipers and snare drummers equidistant from the bass. Appoint someone to stand outside the circle from time to time to check on the volume of the bass and tenors, making sure they are not too dominant but can be heard just outside the circle. In that way, everyone in the band can hear and feel the pulse without being over-powered. Study the placement of bass and tenors so that the snares and pipes are in contact with each other. Losing, or not establishing, this contact can cause one section to get out of "sync" and likely will destroy the integration.

Be attentive to the sound and volume from the tenors. Their main task is to provide additional "color" to the overall sound. The tone and timbre should be pleasing to the ear. Dependent on the skill level, tenors can also add a visual component to highlight certain phrases or passages in the music. Here again, care must be taken to avoid creating a distraction.

Keep in mind that the harmonics produced by the chanters is the lead sound. Drones, bass drum and tenor drums should be blended to this sound. This also applies to the snare drums, keeping in mind that the snare drum sound projected outside the circle is mostly from the bottom heads. Snare drummers need to be sure that they are playing directly on the snare. Too often a drummer has one stick positioned off the snare, creating a noticeable difference in the projected sound.

Transitions and Breaks

Transitions and breaks between tunes need to be definite and "clean." Often a rhythmic "bridge" provided by the snares can add some sense of anticipation for the next tune. Be careful not to overdo it or become repetitive. Also make sure that the bass and lead drummer have visual contact at the breaks so that integration is maintained.

Tune Selection

When picking tunes for a Medley or MSR, communication between the pipe major and the lead drummer is essential. There is little point in a lead drummer being forced to be creative and write a drum score for a tune or tempo that he/she either dislikes or believes is not suited to his/her style of playing, interpretation, or even the capabilities of the drum corps. The players need to enjoy what they are playing, a feeling that communicates itself to the listening audience.

Teamwork

We should remind ourselves that being a band member is truly being a member of a team. Successful bands understand and appreciate the value of every member. Everyone has a part to play, and the band must always be thought of as a unit, with each member striving for the best ways to complement each other. Remember, however, the pipe major will always have the final word. Someone has to "steer the ship."

The writer would like to express his appreciation to RSPBA Adjudicator Jim Baxter for his help in creating this article.

Lengthening Your Stride

By Jeff Mann, WUSPBA President
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I would like to address my thoughts to those of you who have been such an inspiration to me over the past 17 years. I have thought long and hard about what it is that so inspires me about this art. I think it is a mix of several different factors.

1. **Passion:** There is nothing more inspiring to me than to see people with passion. It is a force that drives people to hours of practice. It can build friendships and can create ideas. Passion can lodge in your heart and can create intense feelings of happiness or pain. I believe it is a major factor in what makes us human and gives us identity. It can be good, but if not bridled it can work against us.
2. **Integrity:** I have watched soloists and bands compete for years. I go to the different games and different branch events and see hundreds of familiar faces. I enjoy

listening to the soloists and bands compete, and watching everyone progress year after year. In most cases, I am impressed with the level of integrity and dedication that you possess. Most of you are dedicated to your bands and band mates, your fellow soloists, your art, and your instruments. In most cases, I see you in a light where you are being true to yourself. Because when you are in competition, that is where your personal integrity counts.

3. **Dedication:** This is a big one for me and is one of the ideals that make me smile the most. When you really look at the big picture, the pipe band scene is all about service, and about helping others. I am amazed by the teachers, judges, stewards, games sponsors, administrators, bands and soloists who are serving each other in order to help each other develop and grow. I marvel at the time people take out of their own lives to help others. To serve!

I just arrived back from the Queen Mary Games, which continues to grow and be one of the most successful games I have attended. This year seemed to be one of their best. I paid particular attention to watching those of you who attended and I saw everyone working together and having fun together. That is what this is all about.

Again, in a lot of these areas, most of the time put into pulling off a successful competition is donated time. I look at the games sponsors and what a huge job it is to raise money, locate a venue, recruit all of the people they need in order to run

the event -- and that is just the tip of the iceberg. I applaud your dedication, your passion and your integrity.

I am sure that there are many other traits and ideals that I could ramble on about, but I want to hit on another point that I have been considering. I have been thinking long and hard these last few months about what it is most I would like to accomplish during my tenure here as President. With one last year left, we certainly can work on programs of education, adjudication requirements and certification, and various areas of development. We are certainly taking a crack at it.

However, the thing that would be of most worth to me is to see us lengthening our stride --especially our younger pipers, drummers and drum majors. Reaching out beyond the usual and following the passions of our heart.

Thoreau once said, "The majority of men lead lives of quiet desperation."

Sometimes I wonder if it is because we get so comfortable in our existence that we forget how to live. Sometimes things get too hard and it is so easy to simply give up.

I have a very good friend of mine who is a cameraman for the Olympics. This year at Sochi he was in charge of filming on the moguls and half pipe. We have communicated back and forth with the help of Face Time and it was exciting to hear the news of the athletes and the games. He spoke so much about the dedication and determination of the athletes and how disciplined they are in their areas of athleticism. For behind every one of those athletes there have been hours and hours of dedicated

practice, performance, hurdles and losses, wins and great achievements. I see that in WUSPBA.

Last year at Costa Mesa I saw an incredibly talented group of pipers and drummers from the Glendora High School go up against the formidable opponent, Robert Malcolm Memorial Grade IV. The Glendora band had worked long and hard and I was very anxious to see how they would do. You cannot imagine the joy and happiness that came to me in seeing them win. I was elated. Their attitude was a winning one. I truly believe that attitude plays such an important part on what your outcomes will be.

This year I would challenge you to lengthen your stride. Extend yourself and stretch beyond your comfort zone. Look at ways that you can provide service to others. If you are not sure where you can provide service to the WUSPBA, please contact me.

WUSPBA is always looking for and needing people who are willing and have the passion, dedication and integrity to help. It is so easy to be complacent, but often times you find that complacency is the thing that makes you the most frustrated. (I am speaking from personal experience on this!) Find ways you can help out a games. Find ways how you can help a close friend with their MSR. Extend yourself!

I want to personally thank all of those of you who have touched my life and been an inspiration to me. Those of you who volunteer your time and your talents I have found are the ones who experience the most growth of character and integrity, and who live with passion.

This season I challenge you to live and experience more passion than you ever have through your dedication, your service and your integrity.

Attend the November AGM in a New Location!

By Stuart Baker, Vice President
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One of the commitments the Executive Committee made at the last AGM was to reduce costs for the AGM significantly, so the remaining funds could be directed towards initiatives to benefit the membership. This includes more support for education, improved and reliable score tabulation and faster posting of results, to name just a few.

AGM Expenses

In reviewing the expenses associated with the 2013AGM, which was held in Las Vegas, the major categories were travel, lodging and meeting space. However, it was clear that even if we had free meeting space, we could not reduce our costs enough to meet our self-imposed budget. We needed to drastically reduce expenses in the other two areas.

Meeting in Salt Lake City

We looked at several alternatives before deciding to hold the AGM in Salt Lake City, but none of those would result in cost reductions we needed. By hosting the AGM in Salt Lake we will avoid travel and lodging costs for half of the executive committee, which will allow us to stay within our budget.

While it may seem to some that travel to Salt Lake will be more challenging than to Las Vegas, when I did the research I was surprised to find that airline tickets were about the same price from Denver, San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego as they were to Las Vegas. Hotels will be less expensive and, I expect, so will the food.

Salt Lake City is a beautiful town with some of the world's best skiing a short drive away. I encourage members to attend the AGM this year and enjoy the new truly family friendly location.

Branch Support & Finance Committee on the Horizon

By Matt Biggs, Treasurer
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It's been relatively quiet so far this year on the financial front for the WUSPBA.

We have automated a lot of systems, so that the registrars are able to work independently on electronic registrations. As the bulk of registrations have come in, we are compiling reports and preparing to adjust the annual budget according to updated projected revenue figures. Annual branch support checks should be sent out in the next couple of weeks.

We are also in the process of forming a Finance Committee with an eye toward growing the financial support that WUSPBA can provide to its constituents. I look forward to reporting more on this in the future.

New Communications Policy

By Erin Gunn, Executive Secretary
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Since the AGM in October, the Executive Committee has been working hard to improve the WUSPBA's operational processes. A key topic of discussion during our bi-weekly meetings has been the importance of our communication procedures.

In an effort to improve our communications, the Executive Secretary's office will act as a front office; all communication and requests need to be submitted to the Executive Secretary, and will then in turn be forward onto the appropriate party. For example: solo and

band re-grading requests should first be e-mailed to me, I will forward the request to the Music Board chairman, and the Grading Committee chair. On all forwarded request I will copy the WUSPBA President and Vice President. With this process in place the request will be tracked and far less likely to fall through the cracks.

When submitting a request, please make sure that the subject line details the nature of your request, i.e. John Q. Piper solo re-grading request. Please send all WUSPBA correspondence to the email address above.

Presidents' Council

By Susan Thornton, chair, Presidents' Council, susan@thinkstrategicallyfirst.com



The Presidents' Council was established in 2013 to advise the Executive Committee if difficult issues arise where the input of experienced former WUSPBA presidents might be of value. We had two referrals from the president in recent months; the issues were resolved by the Executive Committee.

Members of the Council (Stewart Baker, John Biggar, Christ Hossack, Andrew Morrill, Scott MacDonald and I) welcome your questions or any input on any topic that concerns you.

If Your Band Hasn't Already Registered, Now's the Time!

By Nancy Theriault, Band Registrar
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Well, the 2014 competition season is off and running! It's exciting to see bands polishing up their repertoires and getting ready for the season's events.

New Systems to be Operational Soon

We are still operating with two computer systems as we wait for the final transition to CTAMS. This has presented a fair number of challenges over the course of the last few months, but due to the goodwill and helpfulness of all involved, things are moving along with only minor inconveniences, and the new system may be in place now. I'll be attempting to use that for Woodland and am looking forward to working with the new format.

Alert: New E-mail Links

There is still the occasional notice of someone trying to get in touch with the band registrar and having their messages returned. The old email contact information from previous years is no longer operational! If you need to get in touch with me, be sure you're using the current link on the WUSPBA website, or

are addressing your messages to bandreg@comcast.net.

Help Available for Band Registrations

Many thanks to all the band managers and Pipe Majors (and one Drum Major!) who have worked with me this winter to get up to speed and get their bands registered. Almost all bands are now paid, registered and have a roster on file. Thank you to everyone who has sent in their dues and paperwork! If you have not done so, and intend to register your band this year, please contact me as soon as possible and I'll be glad to help you take care of that.

Solo Competition Strengthens Soloists and Bands

By Zach Lees, Solo Registrar
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Thanks to everyone who has registered to solo compete with the WUSPBA so far. I think we are off to a great start this year, and I am looking forward to a great competition season.

I was fortunate enough to attend and participate in the Queen Mary games this year. It was fantastic to meet so many new people and reconnect with some old friends. The games were well run and it

was inspiring to see and hear so many talented soloists.

Number of Solo Competitors

I want to take a moment and talk about the number of soloists we have registered so far.

This year we have had 358 soloists register, and of those 16% (59) are new to the association. This looks like a lot but when we compare it to last year, we see that we had roughly 500 soloists. This leaves 201 soloists unaccounted for so far this year.

If any of you have any thoughts as to why our attrition is so high I would love to hear them. Please send me an email at zach.lees@gmail.com with any thoughts or solutions you may have.

Solo Competition Improves Band Competition

I cannot over-emphasize the value of soloing for all pipers and drummers. Not only does it increase the skill of individuals, but if the majority of a band's members are soloists, the overall ability of that band increases as well. I have made many friends and would not be the piper I am today were it not for solo competition.

I would like to ask you all to help encourage pipers and drummers that you know to solo this year. Its great experience and helps us all to become better musicians and more fully enjoy the music that we all love. WUSPBA's database can only handle 999 active solo members and I would love to see us exceed that number of soloists.

Again if any of you have any suggestions about soloing competitions please don't hesitate to send me an email. Feedback from WUSPBA members is crucial to the long-term success of this organization. Each of you are part of this amazing organization and can help make it into something truly special.

Thank you all for playing the music that you do, I look forward to seeing you all out on the field this year.

Strengthening the Links with Games Organizers

By Larry and Cathy Erdmann, Chief Stewards, erdmann.cathy@gmail.com



Hello from your WUSPBA chief stewards!

We are happy to be working with you this year to help strengthen the link between games organizers and WUSPBA. In order to facilitate this, we need your assistance. Please help us to serve you better by providing the names and contact information for games organizers who oversee both bands and soloist competitions.

We also need contact information for WUSPBA representatives in each branch. With up-to-date information, we will be able to deliver all contest forms in a timely manner.

Currently we are in the process of developing an awesome training video for branch representatives. We look forward to a great year.

Exciting Competition Season Predicted

By Andy Trimble, Chair, Music Board
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After taking some time off for the holidays, the Music Board has been back at work on a variety of projects. We have formed three committees that will focus on several aspects of the association.

Adjudication

The Adjudication Committee will focus on the management of judges. This committee is charged with bringing new judges into the program, overseeing the retention of current judges and managing continuing education programs for judges. The committee has been hard at work defining a set of guidelines by which adjudicators are retained and the processes for moving between the two judging panels.

Education

The Education Committee is charged with developing programs for judges' education and musical development for our members. They will work closely with the Adjudication Committee to ensure that our standards for judges are commensurate with other associations and that our judges have a current knowledge base to ensure accurate competition results.

Grading

The Grading Committee is charged with handling regrading requests for both soloists and bands, implementing the protocols by which we will make grading decisions and improving the upgrade/downgrade process.

By establishing the committees, the Music Board members will be able to focus on the tasks at hand and benefit from the specific experience of the respective committee members. It's going to be an exciting year!

Busy Year in the Great Basin

By Michael Gibbs, President, Great Basin Branch, pipermdg@msn.com



We have had a busy few months here in the Great Basin Branch, with more ahead.

In January the Utah Pipe Band put on their annual "David Barclay Memorial Concert." It was an entertaining evening that paid tribute to a very prominent figure in our piping community. David's wife, Virginia, was honored this year for all she and her family have done for piping and Scottish culture in Utah.

The Galloway Highlanders have taken a competition hiatus this year, so those members who are interested in competing have joined forces with Utah Pipe Band. It was nice to watch the concert and see these two bands able to blend musical styles and play so well together. They will be very fun to watch this competition season.

February: Queen Mary and a New Competition Venue

In February, Wasatch & District Pipe Band went to the Queen Mary games, where all three bands in their organization competed and placed well.

Also in February, members of the GBB Executive Committee were able to meet with a group that is interested in putting together a Scottish Festival in Moab, Utah. "Scots on the Rocks" will be held November 7, 8, and 9th. The Great Basin Branch is very excited about the potential for an additional competition in our area, and in such a pristine and unique setting.

We are looking forward to organizing the piping and drumming, and to helping members of our Branch (and hopefully several other bands and soloists) grow and improve through attending and competing at this event. We hope this will be an annual event that will grow and provide bands and soloists from the

West with an opportunity to land a few more valued aggregate points with a late season competition.

March Concert and St. Patrick's Day

On March 15th, the Salt Lake Scots held their 26th annual concert. As always, they did a great job of putting on an enjoyable show. The members of our Branch look forward to attending this event each year.

March also brings our first formal parade of the year, the St. Patrick's Day parade presented by our local Hibernian Society. Most of our local bands marched in this parade, and several also scheduled Pub Crawls for the weekend leading up to St. Patrick's Day and the day itself.

Las Vegas, Thanksgiving Point and Payson Festivals

We look forward to many more out-of-state/branch competitions for our bands and soloists, including the Las Vegas games held in April. One local event, put on by the Utah Scottish Association, will be the Utah Scottish Festival, held at Thanksgiving Point on June 13th and 14th. This one-day event has both band competitions and a wide range of solo competitions. We welcome everyone to participate.

Another one-day competition within the Great Basin Branch boundaries is the Payson Scottish Festival in July. We will share more details on that festival in the next newsletter. We are excited about the continued growth and development of our local pipers, drummers, bands and the branch as a whole!

Planning for a Significant Educational Clinic

By Drew McPheeters, President,
Intermountain Branch
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The branch is fairly quiet right now, this being the tail of the off-season. Unlike Southern California and Arizona, planning to hold outdoor events in the months from October through March is not practical unless the plans involve skis, and therefore highland games and band contests are not possible. Bands in the IMB spend the off-season learning new music, training new students, and raising money.

The Intermountain Branch is in the planning stages of a clinic that will be offered to branch members, as well as members from throughout the association. Full details are still being worked out, but the clinic will be the weekend of October 18-19. We have a commitment from Jack Lee to serve as a piping instructor, and Andrew Elliott will serve as mid-section clinician. Other instructors are still being investigated.

The clinic will be held in the metropolitan Denver area, but an exact location has not been determined yet. If you would like to help with the clinic, have a suggestion

for location or instructors, or would like more details, please contact me.

The Good Life in WUSPBA – and the Northern Branch

By Amber Bartholomeusz, Vice President,
Northern Branch, amberbart@gmail.com



With spring in the air and warmer weather starting to peek over the horizon, bands in the Northern Branch are coming out of winter hibernation and are ramping up for the start of our “local” season, which typically kicks off with the Sacramento Valley Scottish Games in late April. Soloists and band members get to try out the new music they’ve been developing over the winter off-season, and typically experience the first significant sunburn of the competition season as Northern California turns back into an oven for the next several months.

Queen Mary Scottish Games

Some Northern Branch soloists and bands got a head start on the 2014 season by attending the Queen Mary Scottish Games in early February to give the 2014 competition sets a first run in the typically perfect Southern Californian weather. We enjoyed days over 80F, while our poor counterparts in the Eastern states shivered under blankets of

snow and ice while we basked in perfect sunshine, playing tunes and sipping golden beverages in the sun (not always in that exact order). Life is tough in the WUSPBA!

Focus on Development of Bands

Planning for the year is well under way in the Northern Branch with some very exciting competitions and events taking on a new format in 2014, as well as a number of bands moving grades and taking on new challenges.

The specific focus of the Northern Branch in 2014 continues to be development, support and assistance of our local social and development bands. We are lucky in our branch to have a wonderful group of bands in varying stages of musical development, and a strong sense of community that encourages the sharing of knowledge across all organizations, bands and grades.

Restructured "Mount Tam"

The Macintosh Pipe Band's annual "Mount Tam" event later this year will further nurture this approach through a restructured event that will encourage mini-bands and small groups to perform in a non-competitive environment and to get feedback on their performances from a panel of leading judges.

The event will also allow the players to play their musical sets without the stress and pressure of a competition circle, but with the support of their friends and peers. We are very excited to see how this event goes!

Expanded Solo Drumming Event

In addition to "Mount Tam," the Ardenwood Solo Piping and Drumming Contest will be taking place April 5 in the San Francisco Bay Area, with a greatly expanded drumming solo program in 2014 alongside the regular piping events. This event is sanctioned for solo points through WUSPBA, and we hope that Northern Branch drummers will be excited about an extra opportunity to collect solo points that will count towards their aggregate totals for the 2014 solo season (and hopefully bring more of those valued aggregate prizes into the Northern Branch!).

The Northern Branch Executive Committee is actively engaged to continue supporting the players and bands within our region, and we welcome our members to contact us at any time with questions, requests or ideas on how we can continue to grow our branch through this season and into the coming year.

Southern Branch Plans for Use of Funds

By Scott Larson, Chair, Southern Branch
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The Southern Branch held its AGM on Sunday at the Queen Mary games. I am happy to report a good turnout.

Representatives from most of the bands were present, and discussed how branch money should be spent. Most were in favor of having an end-of-year banquet, branch party or other special event so as to use the money to benefit everyone in the branch rather than the select few who know to request funding.

The executive committee will be looking at possibilities for something like this in the next couple of months. If you have an idea on how to spend branch money, please get in touch with me.

Possibility of Dividing the Branch

We also discussed splitting the branch into two smaller branches. No one at the meeting thought that it was a bad idea and everyone present agreed that our branch is huge, but we didn't have anyone at the meeting from outside Southern California. So we will be looking at this issue going forward, and hopefully I'll be able to get feedback from some of the people outside of California as the year proceeds.

As always, please get in touch with me if you have anything to discuss.

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