

The music and marching



of the Golden Bear band

By CEC PRETTY

In recent weeks the Golden Bear Marching Band has been the object of some criticism by Gateway sportswriters. Very little of this criticism is justified and some statements made have been utterly untrue and unfair. I feel that had the total philosophy, function and organization of the group been understood by those reporters their criticism would have been less severe if at all. Nevertheless certain questions have been raised about the value and efficiency of the band and the band's story must be told so readers of the Gateway may judge for themselves.

HISTORY

Until the fall of 1963 all attempts to form a band group on this campus had been largely unsuccessful. Then, in that year, a group of thirty musicians under Conductor Dave Blacker formed the University Concert Band performing two concerts that year in addition to a few off-campus excursions.

The following summer I was asked to lead a marching group for the purpose of playing in parades and at various athletic events. We began with thirteen people, some of whom required a chart of the correct fingering in order to play the right notes.

By late October we had gathered together forty musicians who had seized upon the idea of accompanying the Golden Bear football team to Toronto for the 1965 College Bowl. And so, with the support of some Edmonton businessmen, the Alumni Association, the Friends of the University, and the co-sponsors of the band, the University Athletic Board and the Students' Union, we made the trip.

At this time the University Concert Band was also operating under the sponsorship of the Students' Union and the two bands were independent clubs. The result was considerable duplication of equipment and, because of the lack of musicians on campus, much overlap in key personnel.

In an attempt to improve this situation it was proposed to the Athletic Board and the Students' Council in the fall of 1966 that the bands be amalgamated into one organization known as Golden Bear Bands having three basic groups

—a concert band, a marching band and a big band jazz group. This proposal was accepted and the structure of the organization remains unchanged.

PURPOSES AND PHILOSOPHY

The basic purpose of the group is to provide student bandsmen and women with a maximum of opportunities to participate in any type of band group provided that his musical ability is suitable.

The outcome is that the bands' listening audience is exposed to almost every type of band ensemble music available. The coordination of all this activity tends to ensure that the most efficient use is made of personnel, equipment and available funds. The leaders of each group within the total organization are all professional musicians and/or educators who normally receive fees up to ten dollars per hour but donate their services to the bands.

The demands on the band have made it necessary for its directors and executive to consider carefully many points of view in the choice of music and activities. The provision of opportunity of performance of a wide variety of music reveals that a prime consideration is the educating function of such a group.

LACK OF TRAINING

The underlying source of this view is largely due to the Alberta scene in general and the lack of band training on this campus in particular. This province is not known across Canada for its band activity and good instrumental programs are rare in Alberta schools.

This is reflected on this campus by the curriculum in both Music Education and the Department of Music. In Music Education, graduates are not required to have any practical experience in band performance other than a second year lab course in which they are required to learn the basic techniques of twelve band instruments. Upon graduation they are expected to enter the schools and direct all aspects of a band program while the majority of them have never played in a band.

NO COURSES

The Department of Music does not offer any courses in the band

field although this may be remedied in the near future due to the interest aroused by Golden Bear Bands.

It may be considered significant that each year the percentage of Music Education students in the bands increases which could indicate that the bands provide an academic service for these students.

The roster of band activities over the past three years reveals that the band is called upon increasingly to represent the university as a whole. Nearly twenty-five percent of band performances have been at the request of administration and departments outside UAB and Students' Union and because of the flexibility of the group, the band is able to provide music for almost any function from official ceremonies to dinner music.

In its service to the student body the band, while seeking to improve the quality of all performances, is attempting to provide color and enthusiasm for an increasing number of events. FIW, the Blitz Breakfast, the Commerce Rodeo, VGW aside from the parades, athletic events and concerts are becoming traditional performances for the bands and each year the music library is expanded in order to make their appearance more enjoyable and dynamic.

NO MENTION

Musicians formerly belonged to the servant class and it is not unusual for the band to go without public mention although our files of correspondence contain many letters of appreciation for services rendered. When one considers that probably ten minutes of rehearsal is needed on the average for each minute of performance, the thirty to forty public performances of the band per year demand a rigorous extra-curricular rehearsal schedule.

In addition the key musicians in the band are also in demand to form the core of the Jubilaires' orchestra as well as participating in the University Symphony. It may be some source of wonder why the failure rate among the members of the band is not higher.

And the band does not shut down after final exams. In the summer of 1967 a summer band was instituted and gave four public

performances. This is probably unique among most student organizations.

We have not neglected the social aspects in the band although it is interesting to note that the number of social gatherings for their own sake is decreasing in number. The high morale and sense of satisfaction and togetherness has developed from playing and generally doing it well.

Standing orders of the band prevent drunkenness and disorderly conduct while enroute to, during or after an official band appearance. This has resulted in some striking contrasts to bands commonly seen performing at athletic events on other campuses we have visited. Perhaps this is because their only concern is to generate "spirit" for athletic events.

CRITICAL

In its three years of existence Golden Bear Bands has evolved from two separate groups with two separate aims to become the only organization of its type in Canada. It is patterned directly from long-standing and highly successful bands in the United States where organizations with three and four hundred members are relatively common.

And with a membership of

eighty we are striving to duplicate their service, their excellence and their reputation, lacking their impetus of academic credit for participation.

Our total success and the fulfillment of our obligations to our sponsors, the student body as a whole, our members in their search for musical accomplishment and intellectual fulfillment, and the university community in its entirety as it seeks support from the Alberta community is dependent upon our efforts to develop slowly in many directions at once.

STIMULATION SOUGHT

Our perpetuity depends upon our ability to stimulate the general public and the educational administrators to encourage appreciation and participation in this field of the fine arts. These are not easy nor short-term goals and we have been condemned for saddling a student organization with such high ideals and pseudo-professionalism.

The past three years have seen the development of an organization which is the source of pride and enthusiasm for those who have understood our purposes. Hopefully the future will see the bands grow carefully in quantity and quality until we can fulfil those purposes to a much greater extent.



FOUR-LEGGED FRIEND OF THE MARCHING BAND
... walks off with performing fleas