

District Band Festival held at ACHS

Recently changed format receives mixed reactions from participants

By Brittany Hartl

Formerly known as Band-O-Rama, the District Band Festival brought seven schools to play together at ACHS.

Held on May 6, the concert involved bands from ACHS, Lakes Community High School (LCHS), Emmons School, Antioch Upper Grade School, Grass Lake School, Millburn West Middle School and Palombi Middle School.

According to ACHS band director Patrick Hayes, the event name was changed from Band-O-Rama to District Band Festival last year because they believed the new name sounded classier.

"Many said that 'Band-O-Rama' sounded like a throw-back to the 80s. Some of the students at ACHS were sad to see the title go, but we had to go with what was best for all of the students involved," explained Hayes.

Other than the change of title, this concert also had various differences from past years. Hayes said that the format of the concert had changed last year when it was held at LCHS because of the smaller gymnasium. It was at this time that the concert name was changed to District Band Festival. Hayes went on to say that the directors decided to stick with the format used last year because it turned out to be a success.

The old format of Band-O-Rama involved several sections for the individual school bands to play in and a larger area in the back of the gymnasium for all of the bands to play in together. The new format of the District Band Festival splits the bands into two mass bands, separated by ability and age.

Hayes claimed that the most important change to the festival was philosophy. He added that some of the schools felt embarrassed when they played by themselves because they did not want to be compared to other schools. Some schools thought of the concert as a competition,

which was not the original intent.

"Since schools were talking about not coming, we changed the format to something that was more inclusive and more about everyone making music together," remarked Hayes. "By eliminating individual band performance, the competition element was removed."

However, some students did not share the same opinion as the directors.

"Many people did not like that the individual bands could not perform by themselves and show off their skills," expressed junior Mignon Rademan, an ACHS band member. "Other students did not like that we didn't really practice that much as a mass band."

Junior Anamarie Lynch of the ACHS band revealed some disappointment about the changes.

She specifically pointed out that she was upset that the senior flute players did not get to play in the stands where the audience was sitting, as had usually been done in past Band-O-Rama events.



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*-Patrick Hayes
ACHS band director*

A positive aspect of the changes was that the concert was an hour long, while the previous format had taken at least two and a half hours because of the individual bands all playing their

own songs. "I like the fact that we don't hear each individual band be-

cause then the concert doesn't go on forever, but I liked when the flute players played in the stands because it's tradition," remarked Lynch.

Lynch had a positive and negative viewpoint of the concert.

"I feel that we should be able to interact with the younger kids more to get to know them... I like the fact that we get to play new music and get to work with a guest conductor."

Dr. Laura Sindberg, an Associate Professor of Music at Lawrence University, was the guest director for the concert, and Hayes reported that the students loved working with her.

Hayes commented that though

some students prefer the older format, others enjoyed the newer one. He added that students also appreciate the opportunity to meet students from other schools and to see their former band directors from middle schools.

All of the bands opened the show with "The Star Spangled Banner," and then were separated into the two mass bands.

The ACHS Marching Band will next be seen at Sequoit Summer from 9 am to 12 p.m. on May 31.



Photos by Garik Niffenegger

(Top left) Students from area schools participated in the District Band Festival which was held at ACHS on May 6. The format changed this year separating bands by ability and age, (Top right) ACHS junior Fritz Go.

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