

TBA and Small Schools

Jim Jones

When the Association of Texas Small School Bands came into existence sixteen years ago, the Texas Bandmasters Association was there to help. As the years went by, this collaboration grew into a lasting and successful relationship.

When ATSSB approached TBA in 1991 and requested a presence in the Convention/Clinic registration area, they were provided a table so directors could obtain information about ATSSB and join. The visibility this gave ATSSB not only helped increase the number of members but also added stability to a fledgling organization. Small school directors were made aware of a movement that could help their students become a part of an All State organization. ATSSB membership is approaching 1000 this year. We attribute this achievement in part to the close relationship TBA extended that first and subsequent years.

One of the ways TBA has been supportive is with the Outstanding Performance Series which ATSSB began in 1997. This series is a compact disc audition program designed to select the most outstanding Class C, CC, A, AA, and AAA concert band programs in the state of Texas each year. After adjudication at the Region and Area levels are complete, the finalists are judged at the TBA Convention/Clinic in the summer. TBA has provided space for this final state adjudication each year. Results are posted at the ATSSB table in the registration area and

announced at the TBA Active Member Luncheon. These actions bring statewide recognition to the competition and an added stage for small school bands to display outstanding performances of marches and contest literature. A CD is produced from the competition that includes the best march and two concert selections in each class for that year. A copy is sent to each small school band director in Texas with the September issue of the ATSSB newsletter to help them build a CD library of reference material.

The guidelines of Outstanding Performance Series state that a band may enter one, two, or three of its contest selections. Only UIL-approved selections may be entered. Entries must have been recorded at a UIL contest or at any other approved contest during the period from January 1 until May 18 of the current school year. Conductor's scores are not used at any level of competition. The judges' decisions are based only on aesthetic standards.

All CDs entered at the Region level are sent by the band director to a Designated Region Coordinator (one assigned prior to the school year and who is outside the home Region). A panel of five ATSSB-member directors ranks all the marches and concert selections in each class (Class C and Class CC middle school, Class A, Class AA, and Class AAA high school). The Designated Region

Coordinator takes the two highest-ranked marches and the three highest-ranked concert selections in each of the five classes and forwards them to a Designated Area Coordinator (one assigned prior to the school year and who is outside the home Area).

The Designated Area Coordinators forward the winning set of CDs to OPS State Chair Don Thoede who has been in that position since the program began in 1997. Using the same procedure as was used at Region and Area, the OPS State Chair assembles a judges panel for each of the five classifications. These panels select the one outstanding march and the two outstanding concert selections from each class to be named as the ATSSB Outstanding Performances for that year.

Each director of these winning bands receives a plaque with a copy of the production CD mounted on it. The runner-up in each class for march and concert selection receives a plaque with a laminated certificate. The OPS State Chair presents the awards to the OPS winners at the general membership meeting of ATSSB held in San Antonio in February each year.

In a small school program with younger students and one director, it is possible to play one or two musical pieces that are of a more difficult nature. These schools can participate in a competition and get state recognition for those singular performances rather than rely on the whole program to compete.

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TBA saw a need for clinics specifically for small school band directors and provided answers and solutions to problems their programs faced. So each year, ATSSB-sponsored clinics are scheduled during the TBA Convention/Clinic to meet this need. Without TBA's platform, these services would only have been dealt with on a one-on-one basis, mentor to novice. By affiliation with Texas Bandmasters Association, accreditation is given to these clinics so attendees will receive school in-service credits.

The cooperation and support that was extended sixteen years ago has grown stronger with each passing year. The actions that TBA took to help small school band programs and directors have helped raise the goals and expectations of every small school band student.

I have been a member of TBA for over 30 years and it has been my pleasure and honor to be associated with such an outstanding organization. The small school students of today are realizing some

of the dreams and goals that were set forth by the Founding Charter Members of ATSSB. With the help of TBA, TMEA and ATSSB the future looks bright for the Texas bands of tomorrow.

Jim Jones is a graduate of Gilmer High School and received his bachelors and masters degree from Stephen F. Austin State University. He began his teaching career at Center High School, moved to Pittsburg High School for the next seven years, and then to Cleveland where he was director of bands for 13 years. He then served as director of bands at Carthage ISD for eight years and is now back directing at Center High School. Over the years, bands under his direction have received numerous Sweepstakes Awards, been chosen outstanding in their class and performed at Disney World, Disneyland, the Nation's Capitol and the White House. Mr. Jones averages two honor band clinics per year and has judged at UIL contests for many years. He was TMEA Region X Band chairman, National Association of Military Marching Bands president and on the State Nominating Committee for TBA. He is currently a member of ATSSB, Phi Beta Mu, TMAA, TMEA and president of the Stephen F. Austin Lumberjack Band Alumni Association. He is the UIL Representative for Region XXI and was the past 4A representative to the Region XXI Executive Committee. Mr. Jones served ATSSB as Class AAA Representative and was elected President Pro Tem to finish the term of Steve Moore.