

Proud Of Texas Bands!

Michael Brashear, TBA Executive Director

Greetings from your TBA office! I hope that your fall semester has been very productive and that your groups have achieved and even surpassed the goals you set back in August. Whether your main focus is running a marching band, teaching university, high school, or middle school bands, or teaching beginning students, we all share the incredible joy of music making with our students. Never underestimate the influence you have on each and every one of your students.

Congratulations to all the outstanding bands that were selected to perform at the 2012 UIL State Marching Contest! We are pleased to recognize these groups on page 32. Each year it seems as if the bands continue to get better and better. Congratulations also to the many other outstanding bands that performed at the Area and Region UIL Contests. Your hard work is definitely reflected in these performances.

Recently, Robert Floyd and I were invited to visit the Conn-Selmer plant in Elkhart, Indiana. We were guests of John Stoner, CEO and President and Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser, Vice President-Division of Education. In addition to touring their woodwind and brass factories, we had the opportunity to spend time visiting with their staff. My takeaway from this visit is that Conn-Selmer is very committed to serving and supporting music education. Obviously, the market for selling their fine instruments increases as the number of outstanding band programs in the world grows. Therefore, Conn-Selmer's investment of time and money into music education support is a win-win for them and us. They were very interested in hearing about current challenges and trends in Texas band programs. Over and over they made it clear that Texas is where it is happening for band. As a lifelong Texas band director and cheerleader for Texas bands, this message is one I was glad to hear.

One of the questions asked by the Conn-Selmer staff was: "Why are there so many great band programs in Texas? How do you do it? Other states have outstanding bands, but no other state has so many fine programs." I was happy to share some of my thoughts

and have spent more time since then reflecting on why I believe Texas band programs have experienced great growth and success. I hope my thoughts will cause you to consider how much we have to be thankful for and will challenge all of us to be diligent to protect our programs and to continue the success story.

- School band programs started developing in communities across Texas after World War II primarily to provide entertainment at football games. A community's pride in "their" band was very important and bands developed in small farming communities and towns as well as in larger cities. (Music advocacy at the local level is still extremely important. Strong community support is a major reason Texas bands have survived huge cuts. Take care of your football crowd, school board, and community!)

- During the past 50 years, education and training for band directors has greatly improved. Universities across the state developed music education programs and graduated more and better trained band directors. Dedicated college band directors and music education faculty, past and present, have had a major impact on the quality of band directors and Texas band programs. Universities have also offered summer band camps for years with thousands of high school and middle school students attending and learning from some of the most outstanding band directors of the time.

- During the 50's and 60's, band programs began to flourish even with meager staffing. Many programs had "a" director and were fortunate if there was also a junior high director. Beginners were all taught in one class. A high school band of 100+ members was large. These great pioneers of our profession laid a solid foundation for the future growth of Texas bands. Fast forward to today's staffing standards where many programs have like-instrument classes for beginners, at least two directors at middle schools, and a high school staff of several directors with percussion and guard specialists available to many larger programs. Outstanding private lessons are available for many students and several programs take advantage of



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clinicians and consultants. A direct result of better and more teachers is the unprecedented growth in quality and size of Texas band programs. Great band instruction equals great bands!

- Music instrument manufacturers and retail companies have improved the quality and availability of instruments, especially student line horns. Instrument rental programs, improved products and support from local music retailers and their road men have all contributed in a great way to the development of Texas bands.

- The quantity and quality of band music by outstanding composers has impacted the quality of bands. Availability of educational materials continues to grow and improve.

- Technology including tuners and metronomes, sophisticated recording equipment, online educational materials (and now apps) continues to contribute to the development of bands and challenges the 21st century band student to reach even higher performance levels.

- Bands have more choices than ever for performances at various music festivals, marching contests, and a variety of travel opportunities. Many and varied fundraising opportunities now exist for bands. Quality travel/festival companies and fundraising companies have contributed to the success of Texas bands.

- Band parents are organized into booster clubs that many times operate like small non-profit businesses. This parental support is a key to further growth of band programs.

- TMEA has contributed in many ways to the growth of bands. The Honor Band process was developed to showcase outstanding bands and has defined the standard of excellence for many years. The All State audition process has provided a vehicle for developing musicianship by providing audition etudes and fostering audition skills for thousands of students. There is no way to overstate the importance of music advocacy provided by TMEA leadership, especially Executive Director Robert Floyd. During challenging economic and political environments, this advocacy has protected and enhanced band programs. The TMEA Convention is the world's largest and offers directors outstanding concerts, clinics, and an exhibit hall second to none.

- The UIL Music program has had a major impact on the development of Texas bands. By using the rating system at region level competitions where bands are evaluated against a standard, rather than declaring one winner, UIL created an environment which encouraged directors to help each other by sharing best practices. Under the outstanding leadership of Richard Floyd, the UIL has provided competitions for thousands of band students throughout the years, setting a high standard of excellence which is the envy of the nation. Training and education of UIL judges through the Texas Music Adjudicators Association continues to refine and improve band contests. The UIL Prescribed Music List is widely respected and used by many other states as their approved list. Using input from various committees and working closely with school superintendents, Mr. Floyd has overseen the development of a band contest system that has consistently produced more great bands than any other state in the nation.

- TBA assists band directors by providing the largest summer band convention in the country offering outstanding clinics, concerts, exhibit hall, leadership training for students and booster clubs, and the TBA Academy for young teachers. TBA also offers additional professional development outreach clinics throughout the school year, the *Bandmasters Review*, and a wealth of instructional materials on our website.

As Texas band directors, we have much to be thankful for and much to be proud of. By reflecting on our history, one thing becomes very obvious to me. The unparalleled growth and development of Texas bands is a result of great teaching and learning as well as partnerships and relationships developed over a period of years between many individuals and organizations. As directors today, we stand on the shoulders of those giants who came before us and hold the awesome responsibility to make our contribution to further the success of Texas bands. Based on my observations the past few years, we have a bright future indeed! Have a Happy Holiday, get lots of rest, and KEEP UP THE GREAT WORK!