

Community Bands

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Greater Shore Community Band
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Greater Shore Concert Band Celebrates 40 Years

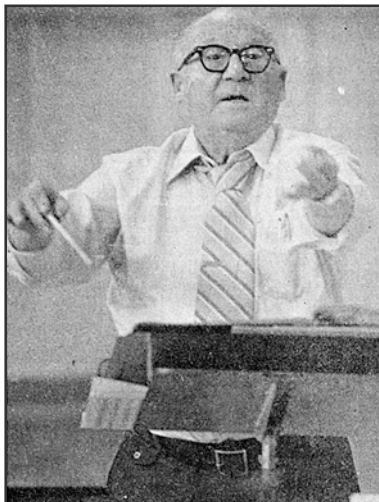


Photo by Mike Milchanowski, www.fotoRED.us

The Greater Shore Concert Band has been entertaining shore area residents since its founding in 1967. Originally under the baton of band director, musicologist and educator, Dr. Henry Melnik and now under its current conductor, James R. Bast, the band has attracted a varied group of musicians, ranging in age from “9 to 90”. What attracts these musicians? A love of “making music together” for the listening pleasure of music lovers! The group is comprised of many professions and vocations including doctors, lawyers, engineers, teachers, band directors, homemakers, business people as well as middle school, high school and college students. Regardless of age, the common thread that links all of these players together is that they all put forth their best efforts while playing challenging music of all periods and styles and have fun doing it.

Its founder, Dr. Melnik, originally from Newark, NJ, devoted his entire life to music: first as a teacher in the Newark school system during the 30’s and 40’s and then at Westminster Choir College in Princeton in the 60’s. After earning two doctoral degrees, he started the music department at Shore Regional High School in Long Branch and founded the Newark Conservatory of Music. He also conducted musicals on Broadway

and worked in TV and radio. With the help and encouragement of his wife, Florence, he founded the Greater Shore Concert Band in 1967 and it became the “love of his life” until his final years. He passed away in June of 1988.



**Dr. Henry Melnik, founder
at a 1982 rehearsal**

For the last 19 years, the band has been under the direction of James R. Bast, who taught at Wall Intermediate School for 35 years before retiring in 2005. A native of Pennsylvania, Jim came to the greater shore

area to serve in the Army Band at Fort Monmouth after graduating from Gettysburg College. Later, he earned his Master’s Degree in Music Education from Temple University. Jim played in the band under Dr. Melnik along with his wife Pat, who was the group’s sole piccolo player and the inspiration for Jim to provide the band with a relaxed, although hard-working atmosphere that seems to permeate the rehearsals. Jim introduced contemporary compositions and composers to the band and has thus added a new facet to the performances. Since his wife’s passing in 2005, the band has performed a special Children’s Concert in her honor each October.

The band rehearses every Tuesday night at the Margaret E. Vetter Elementary School in Eatontown and now numbers around 75 musicians. In addition to performing winter holiday concerts and spring concerts locally, the band members have played and toured abroad including performances in Switzerland, Germany, Austria, England and Scotland.

It celebrated its 40th anniversary by featuring guest trombone soloist, Scott Shelsta, formerly the premier trombone soloist with the US Army Band, who played turn-of-the-century solos with band accompaniment in the style and dress of Arthur Pryor, long-



**Maestro James Bast
at the conclusion of the
40th Anniversary Concert**

(Photo by Mike Milchanowski)

time musician of West Long Branch, NJ.

The band is extremely organized with members of the groups serving in various positions including band secretary, treasurer, publicist, librarian, narrator, equipment manager, as well as ticket and concert program organizer. Several members of the band serve on an executive board to help with the organization and decisions involving the band throughout the year. Compositions which the band includes in each of its concerts are researched with care and include

compositions in the classical, pop, jazz, romantic and contemporary idioms.

Each year, the band presents scholarships to high school seniors within the band, who are moving on to college. Although the band is self-supporting and a non-profit organization it utilizes donations from sponsors and patrons as well as ticket sales to provide these awards to students who have played with the band and have added their talents to the group. The idea of having young players being a part of this band is greatly fostered by conductor, Jim Bast. Accord-



**The band receives a well-deserved
standing ovation at the conclusion of the
40th Anniversary Concert**

(Photo by Mike Milchanowski)

ing to him, "this leads to furthering the concert band movement in the USA and gives the young people an opportunity to be a part of a great organization while expanding their musical talents and getting a chance to play with older, more experienced musicians". Jim also believes that the heart of this band, as with other bands, is the members. They are dedicated, excellent musicians who freely give their talents and time to keep the Greater Shore Band a "Class A" musical performing group!



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