



2007 Fall Season in Full Swing?

Tony Gutierrez, 2007 Band Director

Our 2007 fall season is in full swing with the completion of one of our favorite performances Winston-Salem. We still have a long way to go with multiple performances this weekend. Thanks to everyone who has pitched-in to help when we needed you.

A Study of Contrasts... Two Gigs

Doug Walker, Music Director

I was conductor for both the gigs this past weekend, at The Place in Burlington and at the Winston-Salem German Club Oktoberfest. Boy, what a difference between the two!

We arrived at The Place earlier than we thought we would. It's basically a pool hall in an aluminum-sided building in an industrial district. It was a beautiful night, the garage doors in the walls of the building were open, and the band was setting up on a nice little stage that looked custom-made for us. Nobody was around, but the fest didn't start until 7:00, so that was no big deal. We got the band set up - about 16 pieces, I believe, along with six dancers. We got our barbecue and drank some Heineken beer. Still no audience.

The owner asked us to go ahead and start playing early, so we did. All of six people came outside to sit on a picnic table and watch us. A few more were inside sitting at the bar or shooting pool.

Now, I've been to gigs before where the band outnumbered the audience. But when two of our audience left after the first set, the TRUMPET SECTION outnumbered the audience. It was pretty sad. Turns out that this was basically a biker bar, with a German owner. There was a competing event in Raleigh (Bikefest) that pulled away most of the clientele.

On to Saturday night, then. We set up our 21-piece band on the huge stage in Winston-Salem, then got our food for dinner. The food line was already 200 people deep by the time we finished eating. They asked us to modify our march-in a bit, which we took in stride. Dancers filled the floor right from the start, as usual. This year they chose to let people in for free after 9:00 pm, which helped keep the party going another set - we had jam-packed crowds on the floor for three full sets. Fourth set people started heading home, but it was a great party and a great time.

Anton himself made his first major appearance, using the costume provided by Stan Stopka last year. He was enough of a hit that they asked for him again (we did it without the costume the second time).

One final note: last weekend, Connie directed twice and only called the Chicken Dance once all weekend. This weekend, I directed twice and only called the Chicken Dance once all weekend. I think we're on the way to a record!

On the Road Again: The Place

Jim Wagner, Tuba

When I heard we had been booked into a biker bar I immediately flashed to the scenes in the Blues Brothers where they played Bob's Country Bunker. I pictured chicken wire across the stage and beer bottles flying. So it was with some trepidation that we headed for Burlington.

We came upon in a fairly deserted section of what appeared to be an industrial area. The sign on the fence said, "No Burnouts". I believe that was biker talk for burning rubber. But I could have been wrong. It could have meant the mental condition, I suppose.

Call the LGB Band Phone 919-321-0731

The LGB&D band phone number has recorded messages about the current week's performances. Each message provides a brief synopsis of events, departure locations and times. Messages are usually recorded at least 5-days in advance and are updated if the situation warrants such as gig cancellations, changes in departure locations or times. We strive to insure the phone has the latest up-to-date information. So, on the day of the performance before you leave home, or you're already on your way there, always check the band phone at 919-321-0731.

The Crowd at The Place



Update Your LGB Contact Info

Make sure your contact information on the [LGB&D Address List](#) is up-to-date, especially cell phone numbers. We use them to frequently to communicate among members traveling in a caravan or individually to a performance location.

On the Road Again: The Place (Continued)

Jim Wagner, Tuba

Dave Arner was just in front of us and seemed a little hesitant about proceeding past the gate as well. After all, the gate could be closed and there we'd be. I guess there's strength in numbers so we headed onwards.

Soon we saw The Place proper. It looked like it had been converted from a garage. Only a couple of motorcycles were there, and they were more like full dress hogs than choppers. The truck was already there and it looked like a decent stage area. So, we began setup.

Well, it was a bar, so we moved a lot of bar stools to the stage to sit on. We were definitely going to have a bird's eye view of the crowd, which had yet to arrive. No chicken wire, though.

After setting up we headed over for dinner. What do you know? Barbeque, not brats. As someone who has pretty much reached his lifetime limit on brats I was appreciative of that. A case of beer arrived on stage courtesy of Helmut, the owner. The good stuff, Heineken, not Bud Light. Things were looking up. We now had beer bottles we could throw back if under attack later.

I wandered through the bar area to the restroom and was stopped by a woman who had obviously been there for a while partaking of the beer. She wanted to know what kind of music we play. On the inside I'm saying, "Why both kinds, country and western." While on the outside I'm really saying the proper things. She gave a rather intimidating "Wooo" and let me know she'd be in front of the stage later with more "Woo's". This did not reassure me.

So we began playing to what could only charitably be called the crowd. Maybe a dozen people were there. Well, I thought, the evening is young. Maybe more will be here soon.

The crowd dwindled as the evening progressed. The Woo lady even left. Turns out that Helmut had forgotten that this was the weekend of a huge biker rally in Raleigh. So, no bikers arrived. No one arrived. A shame really. The stage was good, the weather was good. It could have been a good job. Instead it was basically a paid practice.

But I did see some things that evening that made me kind of proud of the LGB&D.

The band played as if there were 1000 people there. The dancers performed well and socialized with the few audience members present. We took pity on Helmut and gave him most of his money back. All in all I considered what we did that evening very professional and classy. While it certainly wasn't the best attended job I've ever seen, we gave it our best and full value. In the end, it's really about what we do when we perform. That's what's important.

The Crowd at Winston Salem

Photos at <http://community.webshots.com/user/littlegermanband>



My Weekend (Oct 21 & 22)

Connie Varner, Conductor & Musician

Friday night (Oct 21st) was to be the first time that St. Thomas More Catholic Church in Chapel Hill was holding an Oktoberfest. As a long-time member, I know that "first timers" can sometimes be great and can sometimes be duds. This one wasn't getting off to a great start, when I read that they had to move their start time, due to a mix-up with the school where it was being held. However, I didn't mind having a little extra time to go home, get ready and get to Chapel Hill on a Friday night, so the re-scheduling was not inconvenient. Like most of the evening's performers, I arrived at the church a few minutes before 6:00. We were supposed to set up, then eat and begin performing at 7:00. Although the people who were setting-up the Oktoberfest were moving incredibly quickly, it was soon evident that the food was not going to be ready before 7:00, so I went to get a beer. It was Carolina Brewery Oktoberfest (not Bud Light or some comparable swill) -- this was a definite plus!!

Kay said that the Dance Group would eat at 7:00 and the band at the first break, so we began playing promptly at 7:00. As conductor for the evening, I was pleasantly surprised to see that many people took to the dance floor with very little encouragement -- it looked like it was going to be a great crowd. Shortly into the set, I noticed that the Dance Group wasn't eating (because the food still wasn't ready) and that the people at the tables seemed to be waiting for something to happen, so I called a march-around, which almost completely emptied the tables.

My Weekend (Oct 21 & 22) Continued

Connie Varner, Conductor & Musician

Naturally, towards the end of the march-around, the food WAS now ready, so the floor cleared and everyone got in line to get their dinner, except for the band, of course, which stayed on stage, and played some "concert"-type selections. Kudos to that band, by the way -- what a great-sounding group it was!

At the first break, the band got their meals and the Dance Group took the floor -- it was nice to see a few "old favorite" dances (like the Fight Plattle) back in the line-up, and the dancers did a great job all night. After the first break, when everyone had eaten, the crowd got increasingly into the party -- every "called" dance (Samba, Schunkel, Anton, Paul Jones etc.) got great participation, and the dance floor was never empty. There was a group of young people there -- the German Club from Durham Academy (with their teacher, a lady wearing a dirndl) and they were really in their element -- they all seemed to know the words to "Hofbrauhaus" and really enjoyed schunkeling. The organizers had a 50-50 draw, and one of the young people from the club was the winner.

One sign of a successful party is when the people don't go home as soon as the 50-50 (or the door prizes, whatever) is over, and, here again, we had a great party on our hands. A few families with young children did leave early, but there were many people who stayed right to the very end. I think every man in the room answered the call for the Praxplattle, which was the last dance of the last dance set. It was a very positive, very enthusiastic audience. Kay also told me that they want us back next year. So, I have to rate St. Thomas More's first-time Oktoberfest as a winner!

On Saturday we were performing for the Concert on the Lawn at Western Blvd. Presbyterian Church, as a thank-you for the use of their hall as the band's rehearsal location. This was a much quieter occasion with a much larger band -- it was good to see some faces that I haven't seen for a while in the group -- although it did make the logistics of trying to keep everyone out of the sun a little tougher. If you were outside that day you know it was hot and pretty humid, and the audience was quite content to stay in their lawn chairs in the shade. Many thanks to Ed, Kris and Chien-Hsin for doing a few dances for the audience (to the music of the band) and for trying to get a little audience participation going, but it just wasn't the right weather for polkas or even chicken dances, so we basically provided a concert, which was well-received by the audience.

On Sunday the band had no performance, but I had to drive down to Pinehurst to meet with some concert sponsors for the Triangle Brass Band (who are playing there in December). Thanks to last week's newsletter, I knew about the Bavarian Brathaus in Carthage. I noticed it as I drove towards Pinehurst in the morning. On my way back, since it had been about four hours since breakfast, I decided to pull in and give it a try and I was also very pleasantly surprised. I had the Drunken Bavarian Chicken, and found everything to be very tasty and well-prepared. My waitress (Laura) was the same lady who had waited on the LGB group the previous weekend -- she remembered you guys! She told me that the owner (and the one who had taught the cooks there how to prepare the food) is a German, who moved to North Carolina from New York. She said the restaurant has been very popular with the people in that area (Pinehurst, Southern Pines, Pinewild, etc.) and that they're doing so well that they have opened a second restaurant in Sanford (although it is only open for dinner at this time). So, even without an LGBD performance on Sunday, the group's previous weekend in the area influenced my day. See what the power of the press can do?
