

Learning the Sounds of Music sweetens life

I suppose if you had to categorize me musically, you would call me a jazzman. I was born when Dizzy was doing Bebop and when Miles was flirting with Avant Garde. I've been told that when I was a toddler, Philly Joe Jones and John Coltrane would hang out and jam with my father, who was a saxophonist, in our North Philly row house.

Evidently, the music gene didn't get passed on to me - I don't know a set of chords from a string section. My idea of a keyboard resembles a typewriter and if I attempted to play a musical instrument, the cops would arrest me for disturbing the peace.

Although I am musically challenged, I have been fortunate to have very talented individuals in my life. To start there's my sister Beatrice - wife of Loni Gamble. They are well known in Central Pennsylvania. Loni rarely does gigs anymore. Today, CAPP and its annual talent showcase is his focus



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of attention.

Then there's the Covert Action rock and roll band out of Muncy. Recently, the patriarch, Bill, Sr. passed away but the band continues to play on under widow Kris Covert's leadership. I met her son Bill, Jr. in Wegman's parking lot in Williamsport a few weeks ago. He's the guitar-playing pastor of Hope Community Church in Loyalsock. He shares the Word through music.

And finally, there's my buddy, Johnny J. Blair, Williamsport's own singer-at-large. A prolific songwriter, he cranks out tunes like an energized bunny. The range of his talent is wide. From folksy down home blues to metallic rock-hard funk he expresses his passion for music to the nth degree.

With all this wealth of talent around me, you would think I would know a little something about music. NOT! But I keep trying.

That's why I hang out at the Community Arts Center (CAC) in Williamsport. It is an excellent venue to hear music. It is home for the Williamsport Symphony Orchestra, a collection of highly talented musicians led by Tomasz Golka, conductor. I go there to learn about classical music.

When it comes that "long-haired stuff", I am completely in the dark, but Mr. Golka and his crew are great educators. His first performance as conductor was back in October when he brought onstage Russian pianist Alexander Ghindin. (I thought I knew great piano playing when I saw it, but Ghindin's mastery blew me away.)

On November 15th, the WSO had Peter Soave as guest artist. He plays a mean bandeon. (What's a bandeon? It's like a small boxy accordion.) I was very casually

dressed the night of that performance. It had been a dull gray day so I wore a bright near-neon yellow sweatshirt to the CAC. I didn't notice my seat assignment on the ticket. All the seats in CAC are good for listening, but unfortunately, I sat on row A, seat 112. I sat directly in front of Peter Soave. I was barely 10 feet away. The poor man had to ignore my brilliant - distracting - sweatshirt. He must have felt like a deer caught in an approaching car's headlights. I am happy to report Mr. Soave, Mr. Golka and the entire Williamsport Symphony Orchestra performed flawlessly!

I really got my groove on when the orchestra played Ravel's Bolero. I am embarrassed to admit it, but I found myself, unconsciously, assisting Mr. Golka! I pretended that I held a baton as my arms flailed about. It must have been a sight. I was a co-conductor! When the piece was over, I didn't bow to the applause. I let Golka and his posse take all the credit.

I came back to the CAC a few days later to see Williamsport Symphony YOUTH Orchestra do their thing. Jennifer Sacher Wiley conducted a fine group of young musicians from area high schools. It was their premiere performance.

The WSYO played Tchaikovsky's Capriccio Italien. (I tell you this stuff grows on you.) I recognized it right away! Golka's oldsters had played the same piece! I made comparisons and I think the seasoned experienced veterans of the WSO have something to worry about. Those kids are good!

So to Mrs. Wiley, Mr. Golka, the WSYO and the WSO; and to the staff at the CAC and to Johnny J. Blair, Bill Covert and the Covert Action Band/family and to my sister and her family... Thanks for making the music.

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