

## A Brief History of the Washtenaw Community Concert Band

The band began as the Ypsilanti Community Band (YCB) on a January evening in 1979 when Lynn Cooper, the director of bands in the Ypsilanti schools, called together a group of his friends, former students, and EMU students to create a community ensemble for adult musicians. There were 59 players for the first concert on May 4, 1979 held at the Ypsilanti High School Auditorium. Subsequent conductors have included Paul Stanifer, Dr. Charles Lee, the late Kenneth Bowman, Dr. Jerry Robbins, Dr. Christopher Heidenreich, and since August 2021, Amy Sierzega, Interim Conductor and Music Director.

The band has performed at numerous community events such as the Ypsilanti Heritage Festival, the Yankee Air Museum in Willow Run, Ypsilanti parks and Depot Town, various Washtenaw Community College (WCC) events, the Motor City Festival in Dearborn, Selfridge Air Guard Base in Macomb County, Concerts in the Park in Milan, with the Blue Lake International Southern Winds in Manchester, and for local fireworks displays. The band has also accepted invitations to perform at the Red Cedar Festival of Community Bands in Okemos eight times.

In June 2010, the YCB and WCC entered into a formal partnership to create the Washtenaw Community Concert Band (WCCB). This arrangement allows the band to welcome WCC student players and provides performance space and support services.

The promotion of music education among the area's youth is important to the band. Each year, the band sponsors the Kenneth Bowman Memorial Scholarship to the Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp and performs a joint concert with an area high school band. Since 2015, the band has sponsored an

annual concerto competition for talented Washtenaw County high school band players and more recently the Young Michigan Composers Concert Band Composition Contest.

Currently, the band performs approximately 6 concerts per year. Most performances are held at Towsley Auditorium or the Morris Lawrence Building Atrium at WCC. Recent concert venues have included Ann Arbor's German Park and Ypsilanti Community High School. Additional community performances include its annual small ensemble concert and sponsorship of its vintage Town Band. WCCB membership has grown to about 80 volunteer players of all ages and backgrounds who come together for the joy of making music.

In 2014, to celebrate 35 years of music-making in Washtenaw County, the band commissioned and performed a new fanfare for wind band titled Daybreak Crossing by area composer Dr. David Biedenbender. In 2019, the band commissioned a new composition titled Star-Splitter by well-known composer and conductor James Curnow to celebrate the band's 40th anniversary. In the Spring of 2022, the band will premier Asylum Lake, composed by Eric P. Szanto, 2021 winner of the Young Michigan Composers Concert Band Composition Contest sponsored by WCCB.

During its year-and-a-half hiatus due to the pandemic, the band continued its musical growth and activities through virtual rehearsals and music education sessions, virtual ensemble concert, and its yearly traditions of scholarships, awards, and competitions. The band is excited to return to playing together and providing the community with quality musical band experiences for years to come.

