

Thursday, Jun. 17, 2010

A Summer Tradition Continues at Utah State University



The USU Alumni Band kicks off its summer 2010 series Sunday, June 27, with a 7 p.m. performance on the Quad.

Among the true tests of summer in Cache Valley — even in a season when the very arrival of summer was in question — is the return of the Utah State University Alumni Band and its concert series.

Summer has finally arrived, and the band is featured in its first concert of the season Sunday, June 27. Concert time is 7 p.m. at the outdoor venue of the USU Quad, immediately east of Old Main. All concerts are free.

The Alumni Band concert tradition was launched in 1963 by USU music department faculty member Max Dalby. Since then, concerts have been held at a variety of venues, indoor and out, and have developed a loyal following, including members of the band itself, said current director and USU music department faculty member Nicholas Morrison.

“We’ve had more than 250 USU-educated musicians respond to our communication and the request to perform with the band,” Morrison said. “These musicians performed in bands while they were here at the university and many continue to perform in bands where they now live. Whether they travel from California or New Jersey, there is a joy in performing with the same people they played music with five years ago, 15 years ago or 40 years ago. The joy of reconnecting musically with these folks is what brings them back to Logan.”

While there are upwards of 250 musicians on the band’s active list, each concert features approximately 60 musicians, including a core group of approximately 20-30 who will perform in all five concerts this summer. Impressively, the band boasts one member who has performed with the organization since its creation in 1963, flutist Anita Ford. Her husband, Bill, later joined the band, and between the two, they have only missed one performance during the band’s entire run.

Each concert follows the format of a band-in-the-park concert of 80-90 years ago. The USU concerts feature a mix of marches, popular music and classical offerings. Guest soloists — both vocal and instrumental — are

often on the program. And a variety of conductors are featured. The program also includes the “Intermission Feature,” where smaller groups or ensembles are invited by Morrison to perform.

While Morrison will be on the podium for most of the June 27 opening concert, Thomas P. Rohrer, director of bands at USU, takes the baton for one selection, *Puszta*, by Belgian composer Jan Van Der Roost. The work is described as a group of gypsy dances and very lively.

“I’m always honored when Dr. Rohrer agrees to conduct,” Morrison said. “We’re glad he’s in the spotlight for this opening concert.”

Also in the spotlight is another USU music department faculty member, Mark Emile, who is the featured violin soloist in the theme from the film *Schindler’s List*. Emile is a long-time faculty member in the department.

The evening’s “Intermission Feature” is a Civil War brass band that includes Hal Briggs, the principal trumpet player in the Alumni Band. The brass band performs with period-appropriate instruments while dressed in authentic uniforms. The band will perform *American Civil War Fantasy*.

Thanks to the outdoor setting, Morrison said Alumni Band concerts are more casual and family appropriate than a formal concert. All concerts this summer will be held outside due to the ongoing work refurbishing the Kent Concert Hall in the Chase Fine Arts Center.

The complete concert schedule for summer 2010 includes the June 27 concert, with additional concerts July 11, 18, 25 and Aug. 1.

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