

Eugene Symphonic Band set to perform on July 4

The band, which features 60 local musicians and has been entertaining since 1957, is scheduled to perform at Washburne Park

By Michelle Meuwissen
for the Emerald

Independence Day is approaching and bringing along some live, local entertainment. The Eugene Symphonic Band will present a free outdoor concert at Washburne Park on July 4. The band consists of 60 local musicians who volunteer their time throughout the year.

"During the summer, we play concerts every Sunday at Washburne Park, starting at the end of June ... until the end of August," ESB manager Sherry Cossey said. Cossey plays clarinet in the band and has been a member since 1966.

Robert Ponto is ESB's director for the ninth year. He is also the director of bands at the University.

"Bob Ponto keeps things lively and has a gift for putting together interesting and varied concerts," ESB member Dwight Vance said.

Band members range in age from 21 to 85 years old. Travis Wong is a 2d student at the University who plays the baritone saxophone. "They immedi-

ately accepted me as an equal. To them I wasn't an upstart 1d kid, I was a musician," Wong explained.

Vance is a 63-year-old retired public school band director who resides in Corvallis.

"I am a tuba player and have played in the band since its first summer in 1957," he said. "The group has always had high standards which made it worth driving to Eugene every Monday night for rehearsal."

Band members come from a variety of occupational backgrounds. Careers include coffee broker, farmer, office administrator, music teacher, physical therapist, fitness consultant, postman and engineer.

Most band members live in the Eugene-Springfield area, but there are a few who have to travel for shows and rehearsals. "There is a flute player from Blue River and a string base player from Aurora, so they have long trips," Cossey said.

The concert at Washburne begins at 6:30 p.m. and admission is free. According to Cossey, the band will provide a rich blend of patriotic, light classical and march music.

"There were close to 600 people last year at (the park); they filled the hillside," Cossey said. "It would be nice to have a similar crowd this year."

Michelle Meuwissen is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.



Courtesy photo

Eugene Symphonic Band director Robert Ponto directs the group at the July 4, 2001, concert.

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