



Original HOBO BAND INCORPORATED

N E W S L E T T E R

• APRIL 2008 •

Serving the Greater Hobo Population Since 1946

OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

AND THE BAND PLAYED BADLY...

By **ALEXANDER McCALL SMITH**

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WHY should real musicians — the ones who can actually play their instruments — have all the fun?

Some years ago, a group of frustrated people in Scotland decided that the pleasure of playing in an orchestra should not be limited to those who are good enough to do so, but should be available to the rankest of amateurs. So we founded the Really Terrible Orchestra, an inclusive orchestra for those who really want to play, but who cannot do so very well. Or cannot do so at all, in some cases.

My own playing set the standard. I play the bassoon, even if not quite the whole bassoon. I have never quite mastered C-sharp, and I am weak on the notes above the high D. In general, I leave these out if they crop up, and I find that the effect is not unpleasant. I am not entirely untutored, of course, having had a course of lessons in the instrument from a music

student who looked quietly appalled while I played. Most of the players in the orchestra are rather like this; they have learned their instruments at some point in their lives, but have not learned them very well. Now such people have their second chance with the Really Terrible Orchestra.

The announcement of the orchestra's founding led to a great wave of applications to join. Our suspicion that there were many people yearning to play in an orchestra but who were too frightened or too ashamed to do anything about it, proved correct. There was no audition, of course, although we had toyed with the idea of a negative audition in which those who were too good would be excluded. This proved to be unnecessary. Nobody like that applied to join.

Some of the members were very marginal musicians, indeed. One of the clarinet players, now retired from the orchestra for

Continued on page 3

UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS

(Subject to Change)

Check the Web site (<http://www.originalhoboband.org>) for the latest engagement updates.

Click on the [MAP] if you need driving directions.

APRIL

Saturday, April 26: 12 p.m. stepoff:
Doo-Dah Parade, Ocean City, NJ
Form 6th & Asbury
No rain date.

MAY

Pennsville (VFW) Memorial Day Parade
Date: Saturday, May 17, 2008
No Rain Date
Step Off: 10am
Parade Start: Route 49 (Broadway) & Acme
Shopping Center
Parade Ends: Route 49 (Broadway & William
Penn Avenue - Pennsville High School
vicinity.
Distance: Approx 1.5 miles

Saturday, May 24th, 12 noon stepoff
Marcus Hook Memorial Day Parade
10th & Walnut to Delaware & Market
Van transportation; ETD TBA
No rain date.

JUNE

Sunday, June 1st, 1:30 p.m.
Malvern, PA Parade w/possible ceremony
Van transportation provided
No rain date.

Saturday, June 14th, 10:15 lineup, 11 stepoff
Separation Day Parade, New Castle, DE
Van transportation provided
No rain date.

Saturday, June 28th, 12 noon stepoff
National Park 4th of July Parade
Line up Coastal Refinery entrance off
Hessian Ave., across from St. Matthew's
No rain date.

JULY

Friday, July 4th, 8:45 a.m. stepoff
Wenonah 4th of July parade
Form & end Mantua & Marion Aves.
Rain date: July 5th

Pitman 4th of July Parade
Date: Friday, July 4, 2008
Step Off: 10am
Start: Lexington & Oakcrest Avenue
Ends: Broadway & Lambs Road
Distance: 2.0mi (approx)

Saturday, July 5th, 3:30 p.m. lineup, 4 p.m.
stepoff; parade and selections in park
Brigantine Independence Day Parade
Van transportation provided
Rain Date Sunday, July 6th, same times

AUGUST

Saturday, August 23rd, 8:00 p.m.
Cape May Summer Concert
Bandstand Gazebo
No rain date.

SEPTEMBER

Pennsville Septemberfest Parade
Date: Saturday, Sept. 6, 2008
Step Off: 11am
Rain Date: Sunday, Sept. 7, 11am
Parade Start: Route 49 (Broadway) & Acme
Shopping Center
Parade Ends: Route 49 (Broadway) near
vicinity of Riverview Beach Park
Distance: Approx 1 mile

Please check the Web site or
Calendar Board in Hobo Hall
for the latest parade / concert
engagements.

AND THE BAND PLAYED BADLY

(CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE)

a period of re-evaluation, stopped at the middle B-flat, before the instrument's natural break. He could go no higher, which was awkward, as that left him very few notes down below. Another, a cellist, was unfortunately very hard of hearing and was also hazy on the tuning of the strings. As an aide-mémoire, he had very sensibly written the names of the notes in pencil on the bridge. This did not appear to help.

At the outset, we employed a professional conductor, which is a must for anybody who is reading this and who is already planning to start a similar orchestra.

Find somebody who is tolerant and has a sense of humor. The conductor also has to be sufficiently confident to be associated with something called the Really Terrible Orchestra; after all, it does go on the résumé.

Our initial efforts were dire, but we were not discouraged. Once we had mastered a few pieces — if mastered is the word — we staged a public concert. We debated whether to charge for admission, but wisely decided against this. That would be going too far.

So should we go to the other extreme and pay people to come? There was some support for this, but we decided against it. Instead, we would give the audience several free glasses of wine before the concert. That, it transpired, helped a great deal.

We need not have worried. Our first concert was packed, and not just with friends and relations. People were intrigued by the sheer honesty of the orchestra's name and came to see who we were. They were delighted.

Emboldened by the rapturous applause, we held more concerts, and our loyal audience grew. Nowadays, when we give our annual concert at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, the hall is full to capacity with hundreds of music-lovers. Standing ovations are two-a-penny. "How these people presume to play in public is quite beyond me," wrote one critic in The Scotsman newspaper. And another one simply said "dire." Well, that may be so, but we never claimed to be anything other than what we are. And we know that we are dire; there's no need to state the obvious. How jejune these critics can be!

Even greater heights were scaled. We made a CD and to our astonishment people bought it. An established composer was commissioned to write a piece for us. We performed this and recorded it at a world premiere, conducted by the astonished composer himself. He closed his eyes. Perhaps he heard the music in his head, as it should have been. This would have made it easier for him.

There is now no stopping us. We have become no better, but we plow on regardless. This is music as therapy, and many of us feel the better for trying. We remain really terrible, but what fun it is. It does not matter, in our view, that we sound irretrievably out of tune.

It does not matter that on more than one occasion members of the orchestra have actually been discovered to be playing different pieces of music, by different composers, at the same time. I, for one, am not ashamed of those difficulties with C-sharp. We persist. After all, we are the Really Terrible Orchestra, and we shall go on and on. Amateurs arise — make a noise!

Original
HOBO BAND
INCORPORATED

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CONCERTS • DEDICATIONS • PARADES
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APRIL, 2008

ORIGINAL HOBO BAND NEWSLETTER

PAGE 4

OFFICERS FOR 2008

PRESIDENT: Rich McKee
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Walt McCleary, Larry Moore, Pete White

April Birthdays

Tice, Brian	April	2
Blackman, Phil	April	12
Tranz, Doug	April	14
White, Pete	April	14
Wiese, George, Jr	April	19
Nelson, Kelly	April	20
Cherrin, Dennis	April	22
Williams, Beverly	April	26

CALLING ALL WIND PLAYERS / DRUMMERS

The Original Hobo Band rehearses
every Thursday evening at 8 p.m. at
Hobo Hall, Lambs Rd. & Holly Ave.
(next to J. G. Cook's Restaurant).
Come on over and sit in.