

## Ensemble for Seniors Celebrates Milestones

Kate Coleman, The Herald-Mail, June 1, 2012

"We don't stop playing because we grow old. We grow old because we stop playing."

I doubt Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw was thinking about "playing" musical instruments when he said that, but if he'd been talking about New Horizons Band, he'd have been spot on.

New Horizons Band is a community musical ensemble for senior citizens. The concept began in 1991 at Eastman School of Music in Rochester, N.Y., the brainchild of Roy Ernst. In the introduction to a book about the phenomenon, Ernst wrote that he believed "anyone can learn to play music at a level that will bring a sense of accomplishment and the ability to perform in a group."

Now, 21 years later, there are more than 8,500 members in more than 200 bands, orchestras and choruses in five countries in what has become the New Horizons International Music Association -- the result of Ernst's "bright idea."

I borrow that phrase from Eve McGrory, charter member and membership coordinator for the New Horizons Band in Hagerstown. Eve, a retired second-grade teacher, fellow "Jersey girl" and elementary school volunteer tutor, plays clarinet with the local ensemble. She also serves on the international association's board of directors.

Hagerstown New Horizons is celebrating its 15th anniversary.

I wrote a story about the band in January 1998. The program had begun the previous fall semester as a noncredit continuing education

class for senior adults at then-Hagerstown Junior College's Valley Mall Center.

Kate Levy founded the New Horizons Band in Hagerstown with 15 players. The group is now 50 members strong -- and I do mean strong.

The band, with a minimum age requirement of 50, played beautifully last year at the Hagerstown Community College memorial celebration of the life of my journalism professor and friend, Larry Sharpe. He had played the B-flat clarinet with the group.

In 1998, Kate Levy told me that senior adults are wonderful students. They give lots of feedback, both in terms of letting her know how much they enjoy the class as well as having interesting questions. She added that there are health benefits for senior adults who play music.

Those things also apply to the fourth- and fifth-grade musicians I saw and heard perform at the recent spring concert at Fountaindale Elementary School for the Arts and Academic Excellence. The kids' focus and resultant pride shone on their young faces.

Pleasure also is evident among the New Horizons players. "It's a wonderful thing," Eve told me.

New Horizons Band's 15th anniversary celebration will include a visit from organization founder Roy Ernst at the group's 1 to 3 p.m. Friday, June 15, rehearsal at the Hagerstown YMCA.

Kate Levy will travel from western New York to guest conduct and play with the band she

founded. The concert will be Saturday, June 30, at the Peter Buys Bandshell in Hagerstown City Park. It will begin at 7:30 p.m.

Bob Dylan's "Forever Young" doesn't have to be on the program. New Horizons embodies it.

Kate Coleman covers The Maryland Symphony and writes a monthly column for the Herald-Mail, Hagerstown, MD.

The complete article can be viewed at:

<http://www.herald-mail.com/lifestyle/hm-ensemble-for-seniors-celebrates-milestones-20120601,0,5844077.column>