

WHS band shares gift of music

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The Wilsonville High School band program puts on many performances throughout the year, whether at sporting events, musical theater productions concerts or competitions. After the fall sports season ends, the band makes the transition from pep band music to concert music.

Even to non-musicians, the difference is extreme. Fast and rowdy game-day music becomes sensitive and melodic Christmas music. And last year, concert season brought with it an entirely new challenge in the form of chamber ensembles.

A chamber ensemble is a smaller group of musicians who play without a conductor. In these ensembles, made up of any desired combination of instrumentation, no two musicians are playing the same exact melodies of the song. Instead, they are all performing accompanying parts. This provides variety as well as an opportunity to learn to collaborate and blend sounds.

The WHS band and orchestra director, Chad Davies, introduced this idea to the program for the first time last year. Forming these ensembles is a class requirement, and each group is to perform in front of some sort of audience by the end of each term.

Although many students did not know what to expect at first, chamber ensembles have become an enjoyable part of the band experience that many participants look forward to. Each week, one class period is set aside for students to meet and rehearse with their ensembles. Members were

able to choose their own instrumentation, their own musical charts and when/where they wanted to perform.

While Mr. Davies is always available and willing to offer help and answers questions, the reins are entirely in the students' hands. This responsibility is entirely different from anything that most of the members have experienced, and the benefits have been tremendous. Not only do students build leadership skills, they gain confidence as well.

Creating and arranging music brings with it a profound sense of accomplishment, even on the most elementary levels. As musicians, we are always proud of our performances as a group. But when we and our peers are the ones to select, direct and create the music being performed, an entirely different kind of pride is introduced. Chamber ensembles encourage students, some who would rather simply blend in, to share their ideas and stand in a well-earned spotlight surrounded by close peers.

Not only do these chamber ensembles benefit those involved, they benefit the community as well. These groups are required to perform for an audience, and that covers a wide range of opportunities.

Many ensembles perform at work parties, Starbucks shops, outside of grocery stores and more. These musicians get to share the benefit of their hard work with those around them, and that is something that can really be appreciated.

Not many communities have eager groups of young musicians willing to perform all around town for the enjoyment of others. Most often, when our community gets to listen to the Wilsonville High School band perform, it takes place at sporting events.

While this is good, it does not fully capture the capabilities that our students possess. Since most of the attendees of our concerts are family members or friends, these chamber ensemble performances provide yet another way to branch out and touch the community with our music, and I believe that can be blessing for many people this holiday season.

Ashlyn McManus is a senior at Wilsonville High School. She is contributing a regular column to the Spokesman this school year.