

# History



## Austin Symphonic Band

The Austin Symphonic Band has been an Austin tradition for over thirty years. The band was formed in the summer of 1981 by brass and woodwind players of the Austin Community Orchestra (now the **Austin Civic Orchestra**). They were seeking an opportunity for more playing time than orchestral music typically provided. **R. Frank Simon** was asked to be the conductor and the first Music Director.

### **Frank Simon Interview**

In a May 27, 2003 interview, R. Frank Simon describes the beginning of the Austin Symphonic Band

Rehearsals began in the summer of 1981. During this period the new performing group called themselves “The New River City Wind Ensemble” and gave concerts at Highland Mall, Barton Creek Mall, Westwood High School, and at the Hillside Theater in Zilker Park.

In June 1982 Mr. Simon resigned in order to take a new position with the Performing Arts Center of the University of Texas at Austin. David Parker, the Principal Horn of the Austin Community Orchestra, served as Interim Conductor for a concert at the Hillside Theater in June 1982 and a Halloween concert in the Capitol Rotunda. While the members sought a permanent conductor, the group’s

name was changed to “Austin Symphonic Band” as it was felt the new name more closely identified the nature and intent of the musicians. **Randol A. Bass** was invited to conduct a series of Christmas concerts in various malls in Austin and was then elected permanent Music Director in January 1983.

During 1983, 1984, and 1985, Mr. Bass led the band at four outdoor concerts at Zilker Park, nine indoor concerts at Bates Recital Hall at the University of Texas at Austin, and at special concerts at Austin’s Laguna Gloria Art Museum and at Taylor (Texas) High School, the first Austin Symphonic Band concert outside of Austin. For Randol Bass’ first concert as ASB Music Director, he played George Gershwin’s *Rhapsody in Blue*.

### **Rhapsody in Blue**

Pianist Randol Bass plays *Rhapsody in Blue* March 20, 1983, Vicente Paredes conducts

At the end of 1985 Randol Bass left the music directorship to undertake other endeavors. The board of directors elected **Richard L. Floyd** as the third Music Director. Mr. Floyd’s first rehearsal with the band was on January 7, 1986 at the Pierce Junior High School cafeteria.

### **Scenes From The Louvre**

Richard Floyd conducts Norman Dello Joio’s *Scenes from “The Louvre”* during his first concert as ASB Music Director, March 22, 1986

**William Haehnel** was appointed as Assistant Music Director in 2003.

The Austin Symphonic Band performs music from the concert wind band repertoire. When the band first formed in 1981, it owned no music. Funds to purchase music were nearly non-existent. The first music director Frank Simon used the words “beg and borrow” to indicate the difficulties in getting music. Only by taking advantage of contacts in the Austin concert band community, could the early music directors assemble the music to play for a concert.

Then, in 1988 music director Richard Floyd became acquainted with John H. Hansen, president of Music Photo International. Mr. Hansen had accumulated a large concert band music library during his 18 years of teaching high school band and conducting a community band in Connecticut. At some point after changing professions, he was looking for a good home for the library. Through his business of taking photographs of musical groups at conferences, he became aware of the Austin Symphonic Band and generously offered it to the band via Mr. Floyd. The

library that John Hansen donated to the Austin Symphonic Band became the core around which today's library is built. As the financial conditions of the band improved, new music could gradually be purchased for a few selections on some concerts. Today, the band has over 800 pieces in its library, which occupies thirteen filing cabinets.



Mr. Richard L. Floyd, Conductor  
AUSTIN SYMPHONIC BAND  
P.O. Box 8028 University Station  
Austin, Tx. 78713

Dear Richard and Band Members:

It was indeed a distinct pleasure to see and "hear" your marvelous Austin Symphonic Band this past weekend in San Antonio!

The QUALITY of Musicians, and the QUALITY of Music performed (and MANNER in which it was performed) was indeed worth the trip to Texas. While I was certain of the leadership, and conducting abilities of Richard Floyd, the Band and its abilities far exceeded my fondest expectations!!!! BRAVO to everyone!!!!!!!!!!!!

Dick, you of course know of my concerns regarding the Music I had accumulated over the 18 years that I taught. I was sure that under your supervision the Music would be not only well taken care of, but also used in such a manner befitting the time and efforts I had spent in accumulating this music.

My fondest expectations could not have been better served in hearing the Band this past weekend, and I am both pleased and proud that the Music again has a "home", and will be enjoyed by people who "care" for this wonderful thing we call "MUSIC"!!!

Thank you for the opportunity to Conduct a number on the program. Having been off the podium for the past 8 years, it seemed both enjoyable and a bit "scary"!!! I felt a bit like a "fish out of water", however again thanks for your kindness in allowing me this opportunity.

Last, but not least, I want to especially thank your Music Librarians, and a number of Band Members who took the time to come by and say "thanks" for giving us this music. The many sincere and personal wishes expressed were touching, and gave added meaning to the moment.

To all, I know that your Symphonic Band will continue to thrive under the Outstanding Direction of Richard Floyd. That you may continue to enjoy the music I so dearly loved, I am grateful for.

Best Wishes and God Bless,

John H. Hansen, President  
MUSIC PHOTO INTERNATIONAL  
The "Music" Photographers

JHH/jps

The Austin Symphonic Band has undertaken several activities during the last three decades:

**Entertain the Public with Live Music Performances,  
Bring Guest Soloists and Musical Groups to Austin,  
Premier New Music,  
Musically Support the Austin Community,  
Perform with other Austin Musical Organizations,  
Stimulate Austin Student Music Education,  
Encourage the National Community Band Movement,  
Provide an Outlet for Wind and Percussion Musicians.**

**Entertain the Public with Live Music Performances** – The primary purpose of the Austin Symphonic Band has been to entertain Austin audiences and share the wind band repertoire with them. Between 1981 and 2013, the band has given more than **300 concerts**. For most of its three decade history, each year the band has typically given three indoor concerts, three Austin outdoor concerts – usually at the outdoor theater in Zilker Park, and concerts before and during fireworks at Independence Day celebrations in Round Rock and Bastrop. Over the years, the band has spread its music around central Texas by giving full-personnel indoor concerts at towns near Austin including Taylor, Cedar Park, Pflugerville, Georgetown, Dripping Springs, Killeen, Florence, Kyle, Marble Falls, Rockdale, San Marcos, Westlake, and Lakeway.

In addition to the regular schedule, the band has frequently presented large formal indoor concerts for the public. The December 8, 1984 Christmas concert of the band with the First United Methodist Church sanctuary choir at Bates Recital Hall on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin was recorded, videotaped, edited, and broadcast by KVUE television in prime time on Christmas Eve. The resulting 30-minute *Seasonal Sounds* special won an Angel, a public television award for distinguished family programming.

#### **Intro 24DEC84**

December 24, 1984 KVUE-TV broadcast, Bates Recital Hall, *Good Christian Men Rejoice*, Randol Bass conducts.

(Used with the permission of KVUE-TV)

In February 1991, guest conductor James Saeid led the band in a re-creation of a Sousa-style concert. “Sousa Spectacular” was played to a sold-out audience in Austin’s Palmer Auditorium. The guest soloist was Brian Bowman, euphonium, playing Simone Mantia's *All Those Endearing Young Charms* and Herbert L. Clarke’s *Carnival of Venice*. Mr. Saeid’s wife Helen led the audience in an old-fashioned sing-a-long.

In November 2010, the Austin Civic Orchestra and the Austin Symphonic Band gave a joint concert at the newly built Long Center for the Performing Arts, which replaced Palmer Auditorium. The band’s special guest group was the City Limits Brass made up of University of Texas Butler School of Music students Jesse Cook, Chris Heldt, Kevin Miescke, Joe Brown, and James Saliers, who played Michael Sweeney’s arrangement of Suite for *Brass Quintet and Concert Band* from Bernstein’s Mass.

**Premier New Music** – One of the goals of the Austin Symphonic Band has been to bring new music to its audiences. More than 25% of the pieces performed at its concerts have been less than 6 years old at the time of the performance. The band has achieved this high level of new music in concerts through the music director’s vigilance in searching for recently published and even about-to-be-published works and a band budget that permits new music purchases. As a result of these ongoing activities, Austin Symphonic Band audiences hear freshly written or arranged music, as well as the familiar standards. Occasionally, the band plays pieces that have not been previously performed in Austin or Texas by any group. For example, the band’s November 21, 1993 performance of deMeij’s Symphony No. 1 “Lord of the Rings” was an Austin premier. Sometimes the music performed is so new it causes a problem; Mr. Floyd had to program the band’s performance of John Mackey’s *Sheltering Sky* near the end of the April 21, 2012 concert to prevent it from being played before the intended world premier, which was scheduled elsewhere on the same day.

**Bring Guest Soloists and Musical Groups to Austin** – The band has frequently brought in guest soloists and groups to perform with the band. With these collaborations, Austin audiences have had the opportunity to see and hear live performances by these talented musicians.

Rhythm and Brass was one of the earliest outside groups to perform with the band. Their precise playing and entertaining presentation of their music is delightful. Soloists who have performed with the band include Charles Villarubia, tuba; Wiff Rudd, trumpet; Brent Phillips, trombone; Dale Underwood, alto saxophone; Jim

Walker, flute; Lynn Klock, saxophone; and Michael Sizer, clarinet. All have special stories. Craig Morris, former principal trumpet of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, performed Broughton's *Excursions* with the band at the Long Center for the Performing Arts in 2012.

The band has also performed with guest soloists who happen to live in the Austin area. Soprano Claire Vangelisti has been accompanied by the band on several occasions. University of Texas professor of trumpet Ray Sasaki performed Robert Russell Bennett's *Rose Variations* with the band in 2003. Former local television news anchor and tenor Ron Oliveira sang *What Child Is This?* with the Austin Symphonic Band accompanying him at the 1984 Christmas concert.

**Musically Support the Austin Community** – As one of the important musical organizations in the Austin area, the Austin Symphonic Band has had the opportunity and the honor to serve the community in various ways besides just performing concerts.

In 1986 the band began a long relationship with **KMFA-FM**, Austin's classical music radio station. That autumn the band played a concert in the station's parking lot to support the station's fund-raising musical garage sale of used electronics and recordings. September 1987 marked the live broadcast of the 30-minute concert – the first live broadcast for the band and a live broadcast of a large musical ensemble for KMFA.

After the 1991 war "Desert Storm" in Kuwait and Iraq, Texas Governor Ann Richards presided over the state's welcome-home of the victorious Texas troops. The Austin Symphonic Band, which was selected to provide music for the event, was seated on a special stage on the grounds of the Texas State Capitol with the yellow-ribbon-wrapped capitol dome in the background. The band and the Austin Choral Union accompanied soprano Barbara Conrad as she sang *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*.

#### **Video2 BattleHymnOfRepublic 910630**

Richard Floyd conducts *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* featuring Barbara Conrad, the Austin Choral Union, and the Austin Symphonic Band, June 30, 1991.



The Austin Symphonic Band welcomes home the troops, June 30, 1991.



Blue Santa Concert in Bates Recital Hall, November 24, 1991.

Each winter the Austin Police Department sponsors the Blue Santa project, which provides Christmas gifts for needy children. From 1990 to 1995 the Austin Symphonic Band gave Blue Santa “kick-off” concerts in Bates Recital Hall at the University of Texas at Austin. SSgt. Sam Cox was the announcer for each concert.

Some of the memorable pieces include *Tom Sawyer's Saturday* narrated by Cactus Pryor,

### **Tom Sawyer's Saturday**

Cactus Pryor narrates John Dankworth's *Tom Sawyer's Saturday* November 24, 1991. Richard Floyd conducts.

Orff's *Carmina Burana*, John Moss' *The Night Before Christmas* narrated by Cathy Conley of KXAN-TV, *Mars, the Bringer of War* from Holst's *The Planets*, and the Austin premier of deMeij's *Symphony No. 1 "The Lord of the Rings"* with Don Toner of the Live Oak Theater acting out the narrations preceding each movement.

On April 24, 1999, the Austin Symphonic Band, under the direction of Van Henry, provided the music – actually, an entire concert – for the dedication ceremony at the new Barbara Jordan Passenger Terminal at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. Dedication remarks were made by mayor Kirk Watson, U.S. representative Lloyd Doggett, former U.S. representative J.J. “Jake” Pickle, and former Austin mayors Bruce Todd and Roy Butler.

Annual recognition of our nation’s birth traditionally contains fireworks and patriotic music. The Austin Symphonic Band is proud to have provided concerts before and during fireworks for thousands of people every year at the Independence Day celebrations in Bastrop since 1991 and Round Rock since 1994.

### **The Stars and Stripes Forever with fireworks**

*The Stars and Stripes Forever* with fireworks, Round Rock Old Settler's Park, July 4, 1996, Richard Floyd conducts.

The band has frequently been invited to provide music at Memorial Day observances at the Texas State Cemetery. A 35-member subset of the Austin Symphonic Band, known as the MicroBand, forms to play special events, such as these, where the full 90-piece band is not required. The MicroBand also plays the Christmas carol Sing-Along concerts (with hot chocolate for the audience) in December at the Trail of Lights in Zilker Park and concerts at retirement homes and children’s hospitals.

**Perform with other Austin Musical Organizations** – The Austin Symphonic Band is musically active in the Austin community, not just by presenting its own concerts, but also by joining with other Austin arts groups to bring varied entertainment to audiences.

The Austin Symphonic Band is occasionally asked for musicians to play in operas that call for *banda* music. Members have performed off stage in Austin Lyric Opera productions of Rigoletto (1995) and Tannhaeuser (1996), and on stage in full costume in Act II of La Boheme (1992, 1997, 2009). The Austin Symphonic Band also made up the fully uniformed band marching and playing at the conclusion of Austin Musical Theater’s 2000 production of The Music Man.



Scene from Act II of Austin Lyric Opera's  
2009 Production of [La Bohème](#)

In its close relationship with KMFA-FM, the radio station staff members have sometimes been special guests. In 1991 radio announcer Randy Harriman narrated Copland's *Lincoln Portrait* while the band was conducted by Peter Bay, newly appointed conductor of the [Austin Symphony Orchestra](#). In 2011 David Crews narrated Walters' *Duty, Honor, Country*, which is based on General Douglas MacArthur's 1962 West Point speech.

The concert "A Highland Fling" combined the bagpipes, costumes, and dancing of the Silver Thistle Pipe and Drums and the Hill Country Highland Dancers with the Austin Symphonic Band. The Austin Handbell Ensemble and the St. Martins Lutheran Church Bell Choir have performed with the Austin Symphonic Band to add sparkle to Christmas concerts. For the large-scale work [The Many Moods of Christmas](#), the voices of the Austin Civic Chorus joined the Austin Symphonic Band with the Visser-Rowland pipe organ at Bates Recital Hall on the University of Texas at Austin campus.

**Stimulate Austin Student Music Education** – One of the goals of the Austin Symphonic Band has been to stimulate and support music education in the Austin area. Many Austin Symphonic Band members make use of their musical knowledge to volunteer as judges during with the annual auditions for regional, area, and all-state band seats. Members also volunteer their skills to help make up the workshop band that the University of Texas at Austin uses for its annual Conductor’s Workshop. Aspiring Texas school band conductors are critiqued on their conducting skills and given suggestions for improvements while conducting the workshop band.

The band has also advanced music education by giving joint concerts with school bands and concerts where band students are interspersed within the Austin Symphonic Band during the performance. One of the early outside-of-Austin concerts was given in 1990 at Rockdale (Texas) High School. For the last three numbers, members of the Rockdale High School Band joined the Austin Symphonic Band. The MicroBand has given joint concerts and mingled-seating concerts with Mendez Middle School and Pierce Middle School music students and a wind instrument demonstration concert for St. Gabriel Catholic Elementary School. The Dripping Springs High School brass section created antiphonal brass effects for the Finale of Kalinnikov’s Symphony No. 1 in G minor. Showing another side of concert-making opportunities, the band was joined by Travis High School’s strings-and-brass mariachi group Mariachi Rebeldes del Sur to create the specialty concert “Viva Mexico!” In June 1993, the band entertained the parents and children of Metz Elementary School with a special Friday evening concert featuring the music of Mexico and Spain.

For many Austin Symphonic Band concerts that have ticket sales, the band offers free tickets to Austin Independent School District wind band students. The band arranges for master classes given in Austin schools by guest soloists who will be performing at upcoming Austin Symphonic Band concerts. This gives students an opportunity to meet and learn from professional musicians and then, soon after, to see them perform.

The Austin Symphonic Band also gives music students attending the University of Texas the opportunity to perform as soloists with a large ensemble accompaniment. Recent concerts have included undergraduates Alex Glen, Josh Balleza, Matt Carr, and Jeff Arredondo playing Koetsier’s *Concertino for Trombone Quartet*, Daniel Frost playing Broughton’s *Tuba Concerto*, and soprano Stephanie Lange singing the beginning and end of Ticheli’s *Angels in the Architecture* from high in Dell Concert Hall at Austin’s Long Center for the Performing Arts.

**Encourage the National Community Band Movement** – A largely unrecognized musical resource produced by our primary and secondary schools is the large number of adults who have instrumental skills but no longer play their instruments. To encourage the formation and development of more and better community bands, the Austin Symphonic Band has actively demonstrated the potential for amateur adult musicians to form adult bands for the enjoyment of making and listening to music in communities all across the country. To make this demonstration, the band applied to, received invitations from, and performed at several major national music conventions that are attended by composers, arrangers, and conductors. Invitations are made only to the best-sounding groups who can deliver polished performances. In some cases the Austin Symphonic Band’s performance was the first time a community band had been on the program.

In 1989 the band first appeared in Chicago at the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic (Mark Custom Records recording MW89-MC-23). The Dallas Brass was featured with the band, and H. Robert Reynolds, Director of Bands at the University of Michigan, was one of the guest conductors. The 1997 Midwest performance featured guest soloist Patrick Sheridan on tuba (Mark Custom Records recording MW97-MC-26). Each Midwest conference has a special clinic given late on one evening. The 1997 Midnight Madness clinic “Looking Beyond the Notes” was given by composer Frank Ticheli with the Austin Symphonic Band playing excerpts from *Cajun Folk Songs*, *Amazing Grace*, *Sun Dance*, and *Blue Shades*. The 2007 performance featured Rhythm and Brass (Mark Custom Records recording 7322-MCD). At that conference Keith Brion presented the clinic “Keys to Unlocking the Secrets of Sousa Marches” (Mark Custom Records recording 7336-MCD) using the full Austin Symphonic Band to demonstrate his points.

The band was invited to perform at the 1993 and 2006 meetings of the American Bandmasters Association. The 1993 New Orleans concert included many well-known guest conductors including John Paynter, Director of Bands at Northwestern University and Music Director of the Northshore Concert Band. Frank Ticheli conducted his *Vesuvius* in the 2006 ABA Richardson, Texas concert.

Saxophonist Lynn Klock was the featured soloist at the band’s concert at the 2004 Western International Band Clinic in Seattle. The band accompanied him for Catherine McMichael’s *Sapphire* and Ferrandino’s arrangement of *Hora Staccato*.

### **Sapphire**

Catherine McMichael’s *Sapphire*, Lynn Klock, saxophone, February 22, 2004. Richard Floyd conducts.

**Provide an Outlet for Wind and Percussion Musicians** – For over thirty years Austin-area wind and percussion musicians have been welcome to sit in on rehearsals of the Austin Symphonic Band. Auditions have never been required to become a member. However, membership in the organization has always been subject to the availability of an opening. The resulting size of the band has been consistently in the 70 to 90 member range. The membership is a sample of the wide range of occupations of Austin-area residents. The membership is always changing. A study of the **25-year roster** from 1982 to 2006 shows the band has over 750 alumni. The earliest known band roster (June 1982) indicates that four early members are still in the band today: Beverly (Foreman) Lowak (flute), Jerry Schwab (euphonium), Karen VanHooser (piccolo and band music librarian), and Chuck Ellis (horn and band equipment transportation manager). Since 1981 over 100 members have served as band officers and served on the **Board of Directors** to support the band's organization.

**Awards and Recognitions** – At the 1989 Father's Day concert in Zilker Park, Austin City Council member Smoot Carl Mitchell presented the Council's proclamation making the Austin Symphonic Band the Official Band of the City of Austin.

### **City of Austin Proclamation**

Smoot Carl Mitchell presents Official Band of the City of Austin Proclamation, June 16, 1989.

In Palmer Auditorium, at the March 1994 Sousa-style concert, Noah Lee, president of the Association of Concert Bands, presented the Sudler Scroll award to the Austin Symphonic Band on behalf of the John Philip Sousa Foundation.

### **Sudler Scroll Presentation**

Noah Lee presents the Sudler Scroll, March 8, 1994.

City of Austin



# Proclamation

WHEREAS, the Austin Symphonic Band is a volunteer community music group dedicated to the artistic performance of a variety of music; and

WHEREAS, Austin Symphonic Band membership is open to all Austin area citizens and members represent the spectrum of Austin citizenry--from student and teacher to secretary and design engineer, from music therapy intern to emergency room nurse, with a common bond being the joy of playing music; and

WHEREAS, the Austin Symphonic Band performs free public concerts accessible by public transportation so that all citizens including seniors and those on limited incomes may attend; and

WHEREAS, the Band serves an educational function as students and band directors may perform or observe the performance of music used in the U. I. L. contests; and

WHEREAS, the Band has received national recognition among adult community bands by being invited to play at the world's foremost professional musicians' convention in Chicago; and

WHEREAS, during Austin's 150th Anniversary, the City Council has determined that such an outstanding community music group preserves the American tradition of the community band and has declared the Austin Symphonic Band the Official Band of the City of Austin;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Sally Shipman, Mayor Pro Tem of the City of Austin, Texas, do hereby proclaim Friday, June 16, 1989, as

## AUSTIN SYMPHONIC BAND DAY

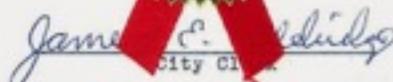
in Austin, and call on all residents to recognize the many contributions this Band is making to the enjoyment of Austin citizens as they share their musical talents with appreciative audiences.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the City of Austin, Texas, to be affixed this 16th day of June, 1989, A. D.

ATTEST:



  
Sally Shipman  
Mayor Pro Tem of Austin

  
James C. Ludwig  
City Clerk

Texas governor and future U.S. President George W. Bush recognized the selection of the Austin Symphonic Band to perform at the 1997 Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic in a letter that was included in the concert program.



STATE OF TEXAS  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

GEORGE W. BUSH  
GOVERNOR

*October 30, 1997*

*Greetings to:*

***Austin Symphonic Band***

***Congratulations for being selected to perform at the Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic in Chicago. This December event provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to work with musicians from around the world. This is one of the highest honors a music program can receive, and you should be proud.***

***I commend you for your dedication to excellence in music, which has helped earn you a performance slot at this world-renowned festival. Texans appreciate your contributions to the community and the culture of the Lone Star State.***

***Best wishes for a good trip and a successful performance.***

*Sincerely,*



GEORGE W. BUSH



**Financial Status** –The band operates on funds received from concert ticket receipts, member dues, private individual donations, business donations, and cultural contracts from the City of Austin through the Cultural Arts Division. The Austin Symphonic Band was incorporated as a 501c3 tax-exempt organization on April 26, 1984. Tax-deductible donations are welcome and may be sent to: Austin Symphonic Band, P.O. Box 6472, Austin, Texas 78762-6472.

**Archives** – The archives of the Austin Symphonic Band are kept at the Austin History Center, 810 Guadalupe Street, Austin, Texas.

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Posted by **ASB Archivist**