

Waldwick band gears up for its summer season

JUNE 9, 2011

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Waldwick – Members of the Waldwick Band were still buzzing with excitement about playing in parades over the Memorial Day weekend as they geared up for the beginning of their summer season of performances in the borough during a rehearsal last week.

Members began setting up their instruments and music stands at 7 p.m. June 2 in the Georgian Room of the senior care facility CareOne at The Cupola in Paramus while the band's conductor, Edmund Moderacki, talked about being only the second person to have ever led the band.

Moderacki, a music teacher in the River Vale school district, took helm of the band in 1978 when its founder, Dr. Walter Nallin, died.

The band was formed in 1954 as the Waldwick Fire Department Band. Moderacki said after World War II, many fire departments organized marching bands to play in parades. The band soon expanded to include Waldwick's Italian Band and the Postal Carriers' Band and began performing concerts in addition to marching in parades.

In 1968, the band reorganized as the Community Band of Waldwick Inc. and played Friday night concerts at the Bergen Mall in Paramus.

Since its founding, the band has played in nearly 1,000 concerts and parades in Waldwick and surrounding towns.

The band, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2004, is one of the state's most active community ensembles and will begin its summer season of concerts in the Waldwick amphitheater at 8 p.m. Tuesday, July 5.

The volunteer music group is now known as the Waldwick Band because it is based in and supported by the borough. Its 65 players, however, come from all over Bergen County and the band performs in about 20 concerts and parades a year in both the borough and surrounding communities that are free to the public.

The members will tell you that what makes the Waldwick Band special is Moderacki's selections of music.

Moderacki says he aims for pieces that are both enjoyable for the audience to hear and the players to perform. They include orchestral transcriptions, Broadway music, film scores, big band favorites and marches.

Nancy Horowitz, the flute section leader who joined the band in the 1980s, said the day of the year that is the most fun for the band is the Fourth of July, but also that in the borough, it always has an "appreciative audience."

"I really enjoy playing," Horowitz said. "We have 15 people in the flute section and everybody likes everybody else."

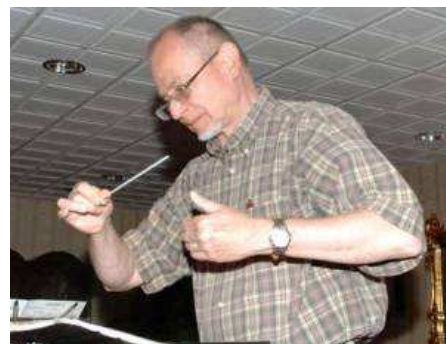
There are no tryouts or fees to join the band, but Moderacki says participants have to be able to follow the music.

"They have to be able to play the music and play it well," Moderacki said. "They soon discover whether they can or can't play the music."

Members come from all walks of life, from college students and retirees. Moderacki said members usually average eight to 10 years in the band, but many have been involved for 20 or 30 years.

During the winter, the band plays with its full ensemble, but in the summer the group drops to about 35 to 40 per concert.

"Everybody is here to play music," Moderacki said. "There is a lot of camaraderie."



The Waldwick Band in concert aboard a float in this year's Midland Park Memorial Day Parade. The band performs in some 20 concerts and parades each year.



Edmund Moderacki, only the second conductor in the band's history, leading in rehearsal last week.

The band practices every Thursday at CareOne and during rehearsals, many who stay at the senior care facility listen and applaud from a balcony overlooking the room.

The band began warming up at exactly 7:30 p.m. with a few scales and segued into "The Colonial March." Next, it practiced a song called "Orpheus," which included the classic cancan tune and then played a soothing overture.

"There is a wide variety," Moderacki said, adding that the band will play anything from the Baroque period to modern music.

Members of the band also say that one of the special things about Moderacki is that he takes time between songs to tell the audience about the piece they are about to play and its composer.

"The music is challenging, but not unattainable," said the band's president, Lloyd de Vries. "And I like the people in the band."

The atmosphere during the practice was friendly, one in which the diverse group of people seemed to be bound by a love of music. That enthusiasm was also evident in Moderacki's conducting. He waved his baton around, crouching low when the music was soft and rising up during crescendos.

"One of the great things about music is that you can come into an ensemble and come into it very easily," Moderacki said. "That's not always true with other community activities."

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