

discussed by our students who school buildings, but in how many  
listen to it either on the sly or hearts is this music echoing  
with permission? Rock is not while Christian lessons are being  
being broadcasted through our taught? Brian Dykstra



## from the TEACHERS' LOUNGE

*Have you ever wondered about the rationale for including "Band" in the course offerings of a school? In our high school in Grand Rapids, band meets for 50 minutes every day of the week. It's a full-credit course. In many of our grade schools, band is offered as a two or three-session a week option to students in 5th through 9th grades. Sometimes those bands may meet during noon hours; but no doubt other sessions are held during "class" time. Whatever the particular circumstances, in the very nature of the case one must take band in stead of doing something else. So, again, the question: should instrumental music have that kind of place in our schools? And, if it does, should students be encouraged to participate in it? A band director in the Teachers' Lounge suggests answers to these questions. Here's Mrs. Gail Worries, director of band in our South Holland (Illinois) Protestant Reformed School:*

# School Band: An Enrichment of the Curriculum

Gail Worries

Their eyes are looking up at me. Their black cases are resting on their laps. At my suggestion the band students open their cases carefully, as many questions arise in their minds. This is the first day of band lessons. A thrill goes through me at the thought of teaching them something they know little about. I often think of taping these first few sessions to play back to them at the end

of a year. They would be struck with what they had learned in a year's time.

Another thought brings me to a nursing home near our school. Our band walked the short distance one afternoon to play a few familiar numbers for the old people there. We had gone once before. The students knew what to expect this time. Many in the audience were verbally excited. Each hymn we played brought out an excited comment from one to another. They shook their heads when a hymn jogged their memory. What a thrill to play for such an audience. The students were afterwards asked to approach the old people who wanted to thank them for coming. Some students actually had to pull away from an appreciative listener.

Why have a band program in our Christian schools? There are some who find it to be an expensive frill. These people see no reason for frills when we have trouble enough meeting the standards for a "basic" Christian education. I can sympathize with them to a point, but feel that a band program can enrich the lives of our children, bring praise to God's name, and be a blessing to others.

God has given us the ability to make music vocally and with instruments. Man's need for emotional expression has brought

out the music in us. That human beings respond to music is a universal fact. That we can express our talents and emotions through music is what music education is all about.

Christian education must be concerned with the total development of our children. We must provide an opportunity for growth in all areas of life. The more a child learns about the music he hears around him, the more meaning it will take on and the more enjoyment he will have from it for the rest of his life.

Band instruction teaches a child how music is made and how the cultures have been reflected through music. He will also learn the theory of music, the written signs and symbols and how it is to be interpreted through his instrument. Of course, he will learn about his instrument and how to play it. He will become familiar with the other instruments in the band. The skills of playing an instrument further develop eye-hand coordination. Learning an instrument takes time and is a challenge that demands discipline and the taking on of new responsibilities. There must be a commitment to daily practice if one wants to grow in the skill of his instrument.

Not only does band provide an opportunity for a child to learn an instrument, but it also provides the opportunity for group parti-

cipation. Unlike sports, each student in band is assured of a position in band and contributes to the overall performance. This demands teamwork and cooperation among band members. The band need not be large, but it should have a balance of instruments. No matter what size (and especially if it is small), each person must put forth his best effort to make the whole band succeed. A student soon learns that if he does not play his part well, the entire band suffers. Band gives each member a sense of belonging that a shared experience brings. The director must guide, encourage, and motivate the students to make band an enjoyable experience for all.

The foremost goal for all students in using what they have learned is to praise God through their preparation and performance of the selected music. They must give to God what talents He has given them. The values of the Christian school are reflected in the music that is played. The director conveys his Christian values in the music he selects and in how he teaches it. There is an opportunity here to select a variety of good music. Obviously, not all music in a performance will be "Christian" in nature, but I believe we must always have some *Psalter* numbers or appropriate hymns in the performance. It's enjoyable to play a piece that

one is otherwise used to singing or has listened to. This provides a way, also, to reflect our faith through the music even though words are not being sung. The audience will review the words in their mind, or sing with the band in an expression of faith.

The performance of the band will leave an impression on the listeners. The band students must be adequately prepared so that the intended emotions and impressions will be made. If the band has conveyed, through their music, the best use of their talents for God's glory, and brought enjoyment to their audience, the performance will have been a worthwhile experience for all.

Once the performances are over and school is finished, many students will close that instrument case for the last time; but the sense of accomplishment will still be with them. Their lives will be enriched with the knowledge of the music they have come to know and enjoy. Some will occasionally bring that instrument out and perform a piece for a church or school function. They will again share their knowledge of music to convey a message to others. The band instruments don't have to remain on the shelf once schooling is over. I think more opportunities should be made for players, at any age, to perform.

I've been meaning to visit my



*For our "Bulletin Board" special this time we'd like to make use of an article which appeared in the Fall, 1985 issue of "The Ledger" — newsletter of Loveland (Colorado) Protestant Reformed School. For the Loveland constituency, Principal Tom DeVries wrote a short account of last fall's Teachers' Convention in Iowa. That convention, incidentally, was noteworthy in this respect that at none other of our 30 previous conventions were there so many teachers present, from so many schools, from so many parts of the country. Even all the way from Lynden, Washington! But... let's hear it from Mr. De Vries. The pictures are from the camera of Mr. Skip Hunter, principal of Northwest Iowa (Doon) Protestant Reformed School.*

On October 17 and 18, all four teachers (from Loveland) attended the thirty-first Protestant Reformed Teachers' Institute Convention at Hull and Doon, Iowa. These institutes are usually held in the Grand Rapids, Michigan area, but this year's meeting was held in the west as a concession to the western teachers. Although we in Loveland are not members of the Institute, the invitation was to us, also. Teachers attended from all of our schools except the one in California.

The thirteen hour trip from here to Iowa can be boring, but in this case it was not. The time held something for everyone. The fall colors were at their peak in the Platte and Missouri river valleys. We followed the old Oregon Trail for about 200 miles, and passed the site where Lewis