

I can't completely express to you my satisfaction with the entire experience involving the performance of the Dallas Brass here at Jerome High School Monday night, but I'll do the best I can.

Even before the concert happened, the visibility this gave our fledgling program here was a godsend -- it's opened quite a few doors for us both in Jerome and the surrounding Magic Valley. This is almost like the culminating stone of the ramp we've been building in the community's collective mind -- this isn't that little non-descript dormant nothing band program any more, after the growth in membership and quality and travel the last two years, and now to "be able to bring in someone like the Dallas Brass", as they say to us, impresses the heck out of the non-believers. Because I'd built our boosters organization with about a dozen superb parents who bought into this early, we were able to grab a very solid handle on this production, and have thereby raised our perceived status in the school, district, community and region's mind. We're now free to go beyond the box a lot farther -- for example, we're submitting an application to perform as part of the "Cultural Olympiad" in Vancouver in 2010, and that would simply have never gone beyond my vision if it wasn't for this step first. Gina Ordaz, my lead Booster told me Monday night that when I'd first told her that we were going to commit several thousand dollars to bringing in this group she'd never heard of, she thought, well, he must have some tricks up his sleeve I don't know about. She (and everyone else here) eventually became convinced I had a clue what I was doing, either when we raised the money for the concert, sold enough tickets to overcome the costs, or (for the non-believers) when they actually saw you perform. (Or, as my wife put it, OK, smart-a**, now you've got to keep this up...) The district now believes we can bring in top-notch performing groups and be a center for the arts beyond our little school concerts, as we've proved with your concert.

The entire forty-plus hour visit was a tremendous experience for me and for all of us. From dinner in Twin Falls (listening to my wife talk bread recipes with Brian and D.J. when she'd feared being a third wheel while the rest of us talked shop) on Sunday, to the ease which Dwight

put all of us on site at Monday morning setting up, to the first rehearsals with the middle school band where Michael stood in with the trombones and they went through conniptions (“He touched my pencil!”), to the wonderful clinic (slash/performance) for my two hundred plus and assorted other school bands – with Jeff’s pet fly and Nat’s video games and the local TV guy who planned to stay twenty minutes and was there two hours – to the high school rehearsal – which ranged from the joy of hearing you play my composition blocking out my job as conductor, to the shock of walking back into the hall to see Michael photographing my band playing Louie Louie – and even to dinner, with our competing caterers (and my wife wants to point out that you had the better menu).

The concert itself was tremendous, and was an eye-opening experience for a lot of our parents, patrons, and community. I last saw the Dallas Brass seven years ago, and the group has evolved so much since then. The pace, range of music, showmanship, everything about the show was outstanding, and to my fairly experienced and somewhat jaded eye more appealing to a wider range of audience, which for a small-town crowd like they have in Jerome, Idaho (including a large number of students) was probably essential to your success. There were four standing ovations, a forty minute mob scene in the foyer signing autographs... I asked all of my classes if we were to bring you back in a year or two, would we sell more or fewer tickets, and the unanimous verdict was more. So many adult raved to us about your performance; many admitted they were blown away unexpectedly by the variety in your show and the prowess you displayed. The inclusion of my bands never felt like an afterthought, but rather as an integral part of the program – even the primary reason for the concert itself. My students certainly believed that, and your treatment of them throughout the day and especially on stage (particularly Michael’s commentary to and about them) did nothing but reaffirm the feeling. Finally, spending an extra half-hour at a meet-and-greet for my boosters and administrators after 10:30 p.m. was above and beyond the call of duty but greatly appreciated (especially from Chris and Nat, who we hope are feeling better by the time you get this!).

I hope that your visit here was significantly above your

expectations, because that's what we were striving for. Given all that this concert has done for us, it's certainly our wish that you got something out of it as well. Glad you ate well, guys, and I hope that the housing and the rehearsal set-up Tuesday was adequate. I have all sorts of stuff to send on to you when we get it all put together: the video of the concert once it's formatted, and the clinic as well if we can manage it, as well as what we're accumulating for press clippings and photos from same. I gave all my classes a survey along the feedback lines Michael and I discussed following the concerts; hopefully their responses are helpful to you. (The phone numbers of eighth grade girls included by same for the younger members of your group should probably be ignored, except for amusement purposes...) You also asked about recordings from our groups – I'll make copies of a couple of things for your curiosity. I know my administrators were working on a letter or whatever they and Michael were talking about at the dessert-event, and we'll pass that along as well. Finally, I think Wendy's got some recipes, especially for D.J., that's she's going to include.

We'd love to have you back here whenever you're touring in the great Intermountain west – you have a faithful following here in Jerome now, thanks to not only your wonderful performance but the way you interacted with everyone you came into contact with. Thanks for a great experience. (And on a personal note, here's a thought Jeff can relate to... I had a flashback during your concert to an experience about twelve years ago, teaching in a different school near Boise, of hosting the Blue Devils drum corps on my football field and thinking, wow, the world-champions are marching on my field. Monday night felt exactly the same way... except that the Blue Devils didn't let me write them a drill and stand on the podium while they performed it for a packed stadium. Thank you.)

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