



The DCAT Purr-spective

The Newsletter of the Drum Corps Alumni of Toronto - November 2019

DCAT (Drum Corps Alumni Toronto) is an organization dedicated to the preservation and joy of Drum & Bugle Corps camaraderie, bringing together past members, relatives, friends, and associates in a social environment for the purpose of companionship and musical activities.

In Memory of Tom Hamilton

The DCAT Chorus was saddened to hear of the passing of Tom Hamilton on November 9, 2019. Tom was one of the founding members of the Chorus.

by Marg and Don Gill

In the spring of 1994 word of mouth had passed among old drum corps people that a reunion was taking place in Cambridge Ontario, to be hosted by the Preston Scout House Alumni Corps. This weekend was to include drum corps from the US, who along with some Canadian Corps, had competed with each other during the 40's, 50's, 60's and 70's. The organization called itself 'The Great Alliance of Seniors', or G.A.S. It was decided that a number of old buddies would attend to find out what it was all about. The weekend was a resounding success and resulted in a group of 6 guys getting together at the Gill's home for a meeting to see if they thought the Toronto area was ready to join in this type of reunion. Hence the Drum Corps Alumni of Toronto, DCAT, was formed. The founding members included Tom Hamilton as President, Don Gill as Vice President, Brian Hill as Treasurer and Dave Cook as Publicist. Marg Gill was named Secretary, since it was decided that notes needed to be taken at meetings. Joe Watson and Stan Babiarz were also members of the founding group. They set about informing band people they knew about the plan and were pleased to find that most of the people they contacted were interested in getting together, forming a chorus and becoming part of the GAS organization. Tom loved to sing and so did most of the original lot that got together. With Tom's leadership, we grew in the first year from 14 members to a group of 25. He approached Ted Key who became our Music Director and prepared us for our first GAS reunion in New York in the spring of 1995.

Tom, along with his wife Raye, were part of DCAT and performances at GAS for many years. Tom's physical health started to fail and he required knee and hip replacements. He

and Raye moved out of the city and were no longer able to be a part of DCAT. We will always be grateful to his efforts in our early years and his wonderful baritone voice which resonated within the chorus.

Don and Tom were buddies and along with Dave Jewel, were known as the 'Three Musketeers'. They marched together in the Ambassador's Drum Corps, where Tom was the Colour Guard Captain. They could be found on Friday nights at the old Cork Room on Bay Street, along with many other drum corps friends, sharing drinks and singing whatever came into their heads.

The Hamilton family, Gill family, and Connell family spent many wonderful family times together, at BBQs, pool times, cottage time at Raye's family cottage, and just doing what families do on these occasions. Somehow the gatherings always ended with us the whole group, usually around a fire pit, singing whatever. The kids all loved it. We went to dances together at the Legion and wherever there was one, and we attended St. Paul's Xmas Carol 'sing', followed by potluck suppers at one of our homes - and of course more singing.

by Wyatt Gill

Some of my fondest memories of Tom included the fact that he knew the words to every song and loved to sing the melody so the rest of us could always play around with the harmonies during the sing songs. They were never the same without him.

Celebration of Life for Tom Hamilton

Tom Hamilton's Celebration Of Life will be held on December 7th from 1-5 pm at the home of his daughter, Lisa Hamilton LeMoine. The address is 50 Selkirk Dr., Brooklin, ON (just north of Whitby).

Recent Performances

Our Business Manager, Pat Ison, worked effectively to keep us busy during the summer, giving the Chorus three performances - one per month!

Scarborough Retirement Residence

Our July performance was challenging because of the extreme heat - both indoors and out! The stage lighting, the size of the stage plus accessibility to the stage created more than a few difficulties. I believe that we all felt that we could give a better performance 'from the floor'



but the management felt otherwise. Regardless, we carried on with our program 'as best we could'. The Purrfections introduced Margaret McFadyen for her debut and applauded her for being able to "pluck up the courage" to sing in the trio. After the show, we had a good number of members who went to the Stone Cottage Inn, around the corner.

Sunnybrook K-Wing

When our Chorus goes to Sunnybrook, we are always made very welcome by the residents and the staff. This past performance in August was no exception. Once the sound checks were completed, and we were all warmed up, we performed our show with excellent responses from the audience. The Purrfections had a great afternoon and were pleased to see so many of the residents and staff singing along with them. Next to receiving a standing ovation, our Chorus is always pleased to see the audience clapping and tapping and singing along to our music. That means that they "get" what we are doing and they inspire us to perform again. As always, our performance brought about a surprise or two. Our show 'ran a little long' and many of the residents had schedules that needed to be met. Wyatt had added "Maple Leaf Forever" to the repertoire for the day, especially for the Sunnybrook audience. So, while some of the residents had left the auditorium, those who remained really enjoyed our version of this wonderful 'second Canadian anthem'. The second hiccup of the afternoon occurred during one of Joe's horn intros. While the final outcome was good, Joe emotionally expressed his frustration at how the passage was performed. Those in the audience who heard him were either nonplussed or amused. Joe has promised to learn some other way to express his frustrations, perhaps in a way that is a little less verbal! (We love ya', Joe!)

Scarborough Civic Centre Performance

Once again, thanks to Pat Ison's tenacity, we were offered the opportunity to perform a two-hour show at the Civic Centre. This occasion made us rethink the expression "be careful what you wish for". During our previous performances at the Civic Centre, we were allowed to have a 15-minute intermission. This year however, we were told "No Intermission". Wyatt's challenge therefore, was to provide close to 120 minutes (including introductions and applause, of course!) of music and still have the Chorus able to stand at the finish! Fortunately, Wyatt prepared a program which allowed many of the members to take a couple of breaks. 'The Purrfections' performed two sets but had to do so without one member of their trio. Margaret McFadyen was unable to attend so Pat and Sandy re-worked their harmonies for two singers instead of three and called upon our Webmaster, Jamie Hale to fill in as soloist in 'Morris the Moose'. Jamie's performance was heart-rending and we thank him for filling in on such short notice!

Wyatt included a drumline as part of the day's performance. This performance was introduced by and included Ort Beaumont, Gord O'Halloran, Gord Irvine and John Parkinson. The audience appreciated the information provided for the presentation and there were more than a few toes tapping along with the drummers. Well done!

I think everyone in the Chorus and the members of the audience enjoyed our supreme effort. However, all of us, including some of the audience members, found the performance to be

TOO LONG! Wyatt has determined that from now on, we will only perform one-hour shows. That way, everybody survives - especially Wyatt!

The After-Glow was well-attended, perhaps a little 'too well'. A few more Chorus members and guests arrived at Boston Pizza than Annie had expected. We waited a little longer for our food, not surprisingly so, considering the size of the group. Everyone pitched in, rearranged tables and chairs, and a 'good time was had by all'.

All About Drum Corps

... drums and horns and flags!

For those of us with absolutely no background in Drum and Bugle Corps, all of the presentations at DCAT's 25th Anniversary Celebration were wonderfully informative introductions to the roots of the Chorus. In our present format as a chorus, we parallel Drum Corps in that we strive to entertain, to please the crowds and to do our very best at each performance. One huge difference between Drum Corps and the Chorus arises from the fact that, while we make use of a bit of mostly appropriate choreography, we are not as physically challenged as Drum Corps members were, in their 'heyday'! And of course the reason is obvious - we are much older now! Marching hard and carrying heavy instruments and flags for 10 or 15 minutes would be very difficult for most of us today. There are the stalwarts among us who continue to march with 'Sigs' and they deserve our undying admiration. The rest of us do what we can.

The following excerpt might be a reminder of the glory days many of you enjoyed in the past.

1960's Drum Corps

from George McCloy, submitted by John Parkinson

"Sweat burning in your eyes...pain in your body that your mind would not allow you to feel...you crossed the Finish Line with your thundering Drum and Bugle Corps...after pushing yourself to the brink of human endurance...you turned to face the crowd...the crowd that you had just given your soul to for the past 13 minutes...knees started coming up higher...with the Flags in full motion...the Rifles spinning...the Drumline shaking the ground...the huge Hornline took one collective breath and sent the ending Fanfare screaming into the stands with such a ferocious burst of raw power that the people leaped to their feet screaming and pounding...for that is what it was like...back in the day...Remember?..."

25th Anniversary Celebration

by Annie Watson

A 25th anniversary celebration is usually described as a "Silver" Anniversary, perhaps hinting at the brilliance and radiance of the metal. Twenty-five years of dedication and loyalty to someone or something is indeed to be celebrated.

DCAT has just passed this milestone in September 2019. Unlike our 20th celebration which was “A Gala”, the Executive chose to make this event a casual affair for the Chorus, including family, friends and alumni. Invitations were sent out, lists compiled and our organizational skills took over. The responses to the invitations were positive so a venue was chosen, committees were formed and we were “in business”, working as a unit with a common goal in sight.

There was a tremendous amount of work done to create displays of costumes and uniforms. Photo albums were on display, showing years of rehearsals, performances, bus trips, crazy fun and nonsense from the past 25 years. Video highlights were presented in a most professional manner with colourful commentary which brought laughter and a few tears to most. “I don’t remember singing that”. “We look so young.” “Boy, we were very good that time.” Such wonderful memories!

There was lots of small talk, picture-taking, time to greet old friends, and of course much food and liquid. The afternoon provided a general sense of well-being for our ‘chosen family’.

Our President, Ort Beaumont, spoke glowingly of our accomplishments as a Chorus and lauded our two Music Directors– Ted Key and Wyatt Gill. Their talents and dedication have allowed us to learn and grow in ways that could not have been imagined twenty-five years earlier.

A fitting conclusion to the afternoon came when Wyatt gathered the Chorus into a circle. With hands held, we sang “Walk Alone” for our guests and for each other.

We will continue to make beautiful music and lasting memories.

A Job Well Done!

by Sandy Hale

Much of the success of the 25th Celebration can be attributed to the energies of Ort Beaumont. He had a vision of how he thought we could best celebrate our achievements and he devised a plan to make that happen. David Beaumont provided his expertise, which allowed Ort – and June - to assemble and present the fabulous video of DCAT through the years. This was a huge undertaking and sincerely appreciated by all who attended the event.

To all those who made lists, prepared invitations, organized the menu, brought food, helped set-up and tear-down, brought photos and other memorabilia, I say “Thank You”.

Reminder!

Come and join us for our DCAT Christmas Party on December 11, 7:30 PM, at ATS (855 Milner).

Please bring along something for the 'potluck' table. There will be gift draws, games, carols, and much more!

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