

WESTWINDS MUSIC SOCIETY

Officially established October 4, 1988 under the name Calgary Music Society, the Westwinds Music Society was born of the need to establish a community band for people to continue playing music together after high school. As plans proceeded, the focus became serving adults and providing a teaching environment for them to learn to play a band instrument, as well as for experienced players to develop their skills. The theme - which Westwinds continues to follow today - was to pursue the enjoyment of music by promoting and fostering the teaching, learning, appreciation, development and performance of music within the adult community in and around Calgary.

Beginning with a membership of 71 adults in the first season, Westwinds comprised a single band at the beginner level. Many individuals were new to music or playing in a band, and some were experienced players who were trying a new instrument. In the fall of 1989, Westwinds added a second band, which played intermediate level music. In the late spring of 1990, plans began for the creation of a third band at the advanced playing level. In the fall of 1992, Westwinds had three Directors and band levels, and the official name was changed to Westwinds Concert Band Society. The fall of 1993 saw the most significant change in the organization of Westwinds with the addition of a choral group. The addition of the choir was considered by Westwinds to be their most noteworthy step as a community-based music society since their inception. In 1994, Westwinds Concert Band Society changed its name to the Westwinds Music Society as a better reflection of the expanding nature of its music programs. In 1995, Westwinds added a second choral program and expanded their music program to include jazz bands. Two jazz band levels were added in 1996, followed by a third and fourth, providing jazz programs from raw beginner to advanced, similar to the concert band program.

The members of Westwinds have participated in band workshops with other adults across Alberta and in parts of the United States. Several groups have also toured in Europe and Cuba. In March 1993, Westwinds hosted its first annual community band workshop and, in 1996, its first annual choral workshop for community and church choirs. Westwinds bands and choirs also participate in band and choral festivals each year. Many of the organization's bands and choirs have won medals and other significant honours for performances at festival competitions over the years.

The bands of Westwinds began their performing career by playing for friends and family members at Christmas and in the spring. They performed in facilities such as Lord Beaverbrook High School and the University of Calgary theatre as well as more public performances in various shopping malls, Heritage Park and local band festivals. On December 21, 1992, Westwinds undertook its first professional performance: a benefit concert for the Alberta Children's Hospital at Jack Singer Concert Hall. The following summer the two groups entered into an alliance, a way for Westwinds to give back to the community. The Children's Hospital was adopted as Westwinds' official charity, and the Hospital provided its support to the organization. Since 1993, Westwinds has contributed more than \$50,000 to the Alberta Children's Hospital Foundation in Calgary. Since then, Westwinds has performed at Spruce Meadows and the Jubilee Auditorium as well as annual Christmas concerts at the Jack Singer Concert Hall. As the society has grown so have the myriad of performances open to the public. Fall, winter and spring concerts are regular occurrences but increasingly jazz bands also take part in gigs in local clubs. In late May, all the groups band together for a year-end event. This year, Parkland Community Association opened its gates for Westwinds to share a wonderful day of music and song, culminating in a barbecue and jazz music in the evening. Many members of the Parkland community joined in the festivities.

Westwinds is a not-for-profit society that is funded by membership fees. Grants have been provided by Alberta Culture, the Alberta Foundation for the Arts and the Calgary Community Lottery Board, and funds have also been raised from casinos which are used to help pay for music and equipment. In addition to professional Music Directors, Westwinds hires professional musicians to conduct clinic

sessions. A volunteer Executive Board, comprised of participating members of the Society, conducts the administration of the organization. As of May 2006, Westwinds Music Society has more than 450 members, thirteen music directors, three choral accompanists and an administrative assistant. The bands and choirs rehearse once per week primarily at Lord Beaverbrook High School and Ernest Manning High School in Calgary. The season runs from September to May, with a reduced choir and band program in the summer if interest warrants. New members are always welcome and are encouraged to attend the Open House on September 13th. Check out their website for more details: www.westwindsmusic.org or contact the office at 255-3485, Email: info@westwindsmusic.org

Westwinds is a leader in the community music movement and an innovator in the field of adult music education. The vision of the society is to be a benchmark from which all similar groups measure success. Through its ability to provide a wide variety of musical styles and services to meet the needs of its members, Westwinds is the model of excellence for community music groups in North America.

Ladies Choir at Parkland Band Shell



Jazz Orchestra in rehearsal

