

South Lyon percussion heats up winter months with music

By Doreen Hannon
SPECIAL WRITER

There's a new group in town called South Lyon Percussion, an extracurricular music activity that is part of the South Lyon High School Bands and the South Lyon Band Parents Association (SLBPA). South Lyon Percussion consists of students presently enrolled in the South Lyon schools who perform a musical program through the winter months after the fall marching band season. Both orchestral (pit) percussion instruments and marching (battery) percussion instruments are used.

Winter Guard International (WGI), the national governing organization for the activity, describes winter percussion as "A symphony of percussive voices blend-

ed to create music through an amazing array of instruments. Musical creativity, technical expertise and dramatic and expressive sound captivate the listener with musical journeys that travel from rudimentary drumming through to experimental sound."

There are the two groups that make up the drumline — the pit and the battery. The pit includes a keyboard section and an auxiliary section. The addition of anvils, barrels, and brake drums add uniqueness to the sound.

The battery is comprised of three voices: snares, tenors and basses. The students wear the drums on harnesses and play while marching.

"South Lyon Percussion is about four years in the making. You get to a level where summer preparation is not enough

for a drumline program and the students are interested in continuing a higher level of percussion interests other than the parts they receive November to late May in concert season," South Lyon High School director of bands, Stephen Cross said.

"Percussion parts are easier for percussion during the concert season, so this gives percussion students an opportunity to develop and broaden their skills and musical background. We wanted to have the students continue working on developing their skills, and the best way to do that for percussionists is through the marching activity."

There are about 30 students in the percussion group from both of the middle schools and the high school, with the goal being to enrich the band programs at the middle school level and gain interest for the high school band program.

"Percussion is an instrument that everyone can play but few can play well," Cross said. "Some of the students play other instruments in the band during the day such as trumpet or saxophone. The instrumentalists have a better sense of melody and learn a better sense of timing with the percussion group, both help each other, and those two elements together make the whole musician."

There are three staff members leading the new South Lyon Percussion group. The percussion director is Jim Rebbeck, an executive with Visteon, whose loves have always been music, marching and drum and bugle corps.

Mr. Rebbeck comes to South Lyon from Novi High School where he built the drumline program and led the group to four state championships and national recognition. He has more than 20 years experience in marching percussion as a performer, instructor, arranger and adjudicator.

Jason Lundgren is a former member of

the Northern Aurora Drum & Bugle Corps and the Santa Clara Vanguard. He worked together with Rebbeck at Novi and is involved with the staff of Dimensions Drum & Bugle Corps.

Tim Rugenstein is a former band director at Taylor Kennedy High School and a graduate of Michigan State University and former member of the Madison Scouts Drum & Bugle Corps as well as Northern Aurora Drum & Bugle Corps.

Rugenstein is a percussion major, who majored not only in battery percussion but also in pit percussion. He wrote a show for the drumline, based on the music of the movie "Pirates of the Caribbean."

"He is a very talented person that we are happy to have on board," Cross said.

Students participate in percussion practice two nights a week from 6 to 9 p.m. and on Saturday mornings. Unlike marching band during the fall, there is no class time.

All the practice is partly in preparation for the "Drumathon," a 24-hour activity slated from 8 a.m. on Jan. 31 until 8 a.m. the following day.

Students will continuously drum for a 24-hour period and are seeking pledges from the community in order to raise funds to support the group.

"There will be something continuously going on, from Jim Rebbeck giving a session on drum set to working on the marching show learning their movements around the gymnasium. It's their last 'mini-camp' before they go into their first show," Cross said.

The South Lyon Percussion will make its debut performance of "Pirates of the Caribbean" on Saturday, Feb. 7, at Montrose High School, which is South Lyon's first Michigan Color Guard Circuit (MCGC) contest of the season.

Two additional student groups active in

South Lyon include Reverie of South Lyon Winterguard and Rhapsody of South Lyon Winterguard, under the direction of Renee Cole and assistant Angie Szalai with show design by Dave Watt.

Reverie will enter their fifth season of competition. They will be performing to a version of the Moody Blues "Nights in White Satin," choreographed with flags, rifles, sabres, and dance.

Rhapsody is a new group that began due to the overwhelming interest of students. Rhapsody will be performing "Cowboy Take Me Away," by the Dixie Chicks. All three groups will perform Feb. 7 and 29, March 13 and April 3. To learn more about Winter Guard International, visit online at wgi.org.

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Submitted photo

The pit strikes a pose in the high school bandroom. Left to right: Nate Freier, Julie Stoscup, Patty Bowen, Becky Ditto, Toni Lopez, Calvin Williams III, Whitney Mitchell, Gordon Keevis (in front), Jared Cort (in back), Kate Bridson, and Troy Turbett.

SHOW TIMES

Upcoming competitions for South Lyon Percussion:

- **Sunday, Feb. 29** — Montrose High School (MCGC Contest WGI Preview)
- **Saturday, March 13** — South Lyon High School (MCGC Contest)
- **Saturday, March 27** — Dakota High School in Mt. Clemons (MCGC Contest)
- **Saturday, April 3** — Saginaw Valley State University (MCGC State Championships)