

Autumn 2024 Legacy Tour

On the Road with the Minnesota State Band

For several years now the Minnesota State Band has been granted money from the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. We have used this money to travel to many small towns in outstate Minnesota to bring our music to the public. After all, we could hardly call ourselves the “Official Band of the State of Minnesota” if we only performed in the Twin Cities. Here is a short list of places we have recently visited: Litchfield, Hutchinson, Chatfield, Iron, Moose Lake, Park Rapids, Wadena and the Red Lake Nation.



Now some groups might travel to a location, set up and then play a concert without ever really trying to understand the community they are visiting. When we travel, we always look for opportunities to be a positive influence.

So let me tell you about our most recent overnight trip to Montevideo and Willmar to give you a little taste of what our tours are like.

October 4, 2024 was a very early morning. We met our motor coach at Saint Paul College in St. Paul where we loaded our instruments underneath the bus at 6:55 am. We of course had prearranged everything so we could leave our cars in the parking lot at the College. Unfortunately, the school did not contact the security staff on duty who told us we could not park overnight. But in a short time, we got that straightened out and we were good to go.



We arrived at Montevideo Middle School at 10:25 and met with the middle school band director, Riley Frank. Our primary purpose was to work with the kids playing in one of the school bands.



Our band divided into several groups. The brass players worked with the brass players. Our flute players worked with the flute students. You get the picture. We each had a specialty and we loved the idea of working with the middle-schoolers, helping them with their tone and technique. There were four separate classes of band students that represented the different ages of players.



Julie and myself were in charge of the drummers and divided the work. Can you believe that at one point we were asked to play a little quieter? Hard to believe...



My job was to teach the kids how to do a proper roll on the Timpani. Afterwards, Julie showed them how to do a proper snare drum roll. This type of small group of instruction was a perfect way to work with the kids, by demonstrating and then allowing them to show what they learned.



But of course, our larger goal was to get them excited about band and playing an instrument. We wanted to motivate these young musicians so they would continue playing in high school and college. Maybe some of these kids will become members of our band someday.



After a great meal at the school cafeteria, we went to the Gym where we performed a concert.

After our visit to Montevideo Middle School, we had no time to waste. Next stop was the Montevideo Veterans Home. Although, there was one small problem, we couldn't play inside the building because there was an outbreak of Covid. Do you think this stopped us? Absolutely not.

We just played an outdoor concert with the veterans in chairs by the loading dock. There was another challenge that day, the wind. Now our band is used to a little wind at an outdoor concert but these were gusts that could and did knock over music stands. I think I used about twenty clothes pins that day to try to prevent the music from flying off. Sometimes it worked, sometimes it didn't. But despite the difficult circumstances the Veterans were a great audience and appreciated everything we did to bring the concert to them.



Well, we finally did get a chance to rest after the Veterans Home concert and had an excellent meal at the Spicer American Legion. After a good night's rest, it was on to The Barn Theatre in Willmar, a beautiful restored theatre. Here there was no wind to deal with and we ended up playing one of our best performances of the year.

