

Frank L. Battisti

Frank Battisti began his teaching career as an instrumental teacher in the Ithaca (New York) Public Schools in 1953. He became Director of Bands at Ithaca High School in 1955 and remained there until 1967. He also served as chairperson of the Instrumental Music Department from 1961 - 67.

The Ithaca High School Band, under Battisti's direction, achieved national recognition as one of the finest and most unique high school bands in the nation. The concert band performed at the Ithaca College School of Music, Eastman School of Music, Music Educators National Conference (MENC), Mid-West National Band and Orchestra Clinic (Chicago 1965), Rockefeller Center, the New York World's Fair (1964) and at other regional and national music events. In 1997 the John Philip Sousa Foundation selected Battisti's Ithaca High School Concert Band for their Historic Roll of Honor of High School Concert Bands, 1920-1980. Eugene Migliaro Corporon, Director of Wind Studies at North Texas State University, hails the Ithaca High School Band under the leadership of Frank Battisti "as one of the truly great achievements of instrumental music education in the twentieth century."

From 1958 - 67, the Ithaca High School Band commissioned 24 works for band. The commissioned composers included Warren Benson, David Borden, Carlos Chavez, Barney Childs, Walter Hartley, Vincent Persichetti, Armand Russell, Alec Wilder and Pulitzer Prize in Music winners Leslie Bassett, Karel Husa, Robert Ward, Gunther Schuller.

Guest soloists and conductors appearing with the Ithaca High School Band from 1955-67 included Benny Goodman, Carl "Doc" Severinson, Donald Sinta, Harvey Phillips, The New York Brass Quintet, Jimmy Burke, Vincent Persichetti, Norman Dello Joio, Thomas Beversdorf, Clyde Roller, Frederick Fennell, William D. Revelli and Walter Beeler.

Battisti was conductor of the Symphonic Wind Ensemble and a faculty member at Baldwin-Wallace College Conservatory of Music from 1967 - 69. In 1969 President Gunther Schuller invited him to come to the New England Conservatory in Boston to start the wind ensemble. Under his 30 years of leadership the ensemble became recognized as one of the premiere ensembles of its kind in the United States and throughout the world. The ensemble recorded for Centaur and Albany records and its performances were broadcast over the National Public Radio Network (NPR) and other classical music radio stations throughout the United States and world. While at the Conservatory Battisti commissioned works from distinguished national and international composers such as Robert Ceely, John Harbison, Robin Holloway, Witold Lutoslawski, William Thomas McKinley, Michael Colgrass, Daniel Pinkham, Gunther Schuller, Robert Selig, and Sir Michael Tippett. When he retired from the Conservatory in 1999 he was named Conductor Emeritus of the NEC Wind Ensemble.

Dr. Battisti has guest conducted numerous university, college, military, professional and high school bands and wind ensembles and served as a visiting teacher/clinician throughout the United States, England, Europe, Middle East, Africa, Scandinavia, Australia, China, Taiwan, Canada, South America, South Korea, Iceland and the former U.S.S.R.

Past President of the U.S. College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA), Battisti is also a member of the American Bandmasters Association (ABA) and founder of the National Wind Ensemble Conference, World Association of Symphonic Bands and Ensembles (WASBE), Massachusetts Youth Wind Ensemble (MYWE), New England College Band Association (NECBA) and the Tanglewood Institute's Young Artists Wind Ensemble.

In 1986 and 1993 Dr. Battisti was a visiting fellow at Clare Hall, Cambridge University, England. He is the recipient of many awards and honors including an Honorary Doctor of Music degree from Ithaca College in 1992 and the Ithaca College Alumni Association's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2003, the first Louis and Adrienne Krasner Excellence in Teaching Award from the New England Conservatory of Music in 1997, the Lowell Mason Award from the Massachusetts Music Educators Association in 1998, the New England College Band Association's Lifetime Achievement Award in 1999, Midwest International Band and Orchestra Clinic's Medal of Honor in 2001 and the National Band Director's AWAPA in 2006.

Since 2000 Battisti has been Principal Guest Conductor of the Longy School of Music Chamber Winds in Cambridge, MA.

Statements about Music, Music Teaching, and Music Teachers by Frank L. Battisti.

Music and the Arts are important!! They provide opportunities for individuals to express, create, and learn, and can lead to a deeper and better understanding of oneself and others (both cognitively and emotionally). The arts encourage individuals to feel, think, and solve problems creatively, to arrive at conclusions and answers in unique ways. The universality of great art provides opportunities for individuals to transcend time, geographical, national, and cultural boundaries. Music, art, dance and theater, like reading, math and science, should be part of every person's education and life.

What music students study and perform truly matters. In musical terms, students become what they experience. Zoltán Kodály, one of the 20th century's important composer-music educators, stated that, "Children should be taught with only the most musically valuable materials. For the young, only the best is good enough. They should be led to masterpieces by means of masterpieces." The musical values and appreciation students develop are directly linked to the quality of the music they study, create, recreate and consume.

Few things in a school curriculum have the lasting effect that exposure to great music has on the young. Music and the arts help develop deep minds, open hearts and rich souls. It is essential that it be included in the education of young people.

Music educator-conductors must be excellent musicians with high musical values, standards and "taste" and a passion for sharing their knowledge and love of music with young people. The basic objectives of all music educators, including conductors of school ensembles, should be to assist students in developing their understanding and appreciation of music (experience its expressive power) and ability to create and recreate it. Students must be challenged musically, intellectually and emotionally. This is best done through the study and performance of great music.

Collaborative music making (playing in an orchestra or wind band/ensemble, singing in a choir, playing in a chamber music group, etc.) bring people closer together. Leonard Bernstein comments on this "sharing experience" in his book, The Joy of Music, "... when [I and] one hundred men share feelings exactly, simultaneously, responding as one to each rise and fall of the music, to each point of arrival and departure, to each little inner pulse—then there is a human identity of feeling that has no equal elsewhere..." Performance of great music magnifies the common denominators and diminishes the differences between people.

Commencement speakers urge graduates to "keep on growing...don't go to seed!" This is excellent advice for everyone, including teachers and conductors. "Goya—age eighty-nine—wrote, 'I am still learning'...real artists continue to learn—to the very end." The choices in life are simple - either one grows or dies. In order for conductor-teachers to realize their potential they must continually grow personally and professionally throughout life.

Books by Frank L. Battisti.

JUST RELEASED !!! Becoming a Conductor. Published by Meredith Music Publications (2007).

Lead and Create. Co-authored with Robert Garofalo. Published by Whirlwind Music Publications (2005).

The Winds of Change. Published by Meredith Music Publications (2002).

The 20th Century American Wind Band/Ensemble. Published by Meredith Music Publications (1995).

Score Study for the Wind Band Conductor. Co-authored with Robert Garofalo. Published by Meredith Music Publications (1990).

