

**ESSAY: 2008-2009 Lunsford/Behrend Scholarship Fund Application**

*How have you benefited as a musician and a person by being involved in the Robinson band program during your high school years? How do you believe this experience will help you in the future?*

By Jack Sutey

As soon as I stood my legs went numb. Cradling my bassoon in my arms, I let out the most satisfied sigh in my life, which was enveloped in the roar of the audience. I realized I had come a long way in four months.

It was my freshman year. The difference between middle and high school symphonic band was outrageous. Every new piece that was passed out became the new hardest-thing-I-have-ever-played, and by the time *Lincolnshire Posy* reached my stand in November, I had no idea how much this piece would change me.

I never thought that I would be skilled enough to play the new piece of music. I got lost three lines into the first movement, the second was nearly impossible to play in tune, the fourth required ridiculous levels of dexterity, the notation in the fifth was completely foreign to me, and the sixth was a mental marathon just to keep up with the strict three-four time signature. The third movement? We skipped it for time restriction's sake, but after listening to a recording, I was intimidated enough.

The first reading was terrible, and it turns out that I was not the only one baffled by its complexity. Sometimes when notably difficult music is passed out, the band tends to dislike it at first, but strangely that was not how it seemed with *Lincolnshire Posy*. It had a little something for everybody. Peppy, bouncing first and fourth movements, joined with the somber tones of the second and almost militaristic fifth and sixth - most everyone was excited by at least *one* of them.

“Let's keep this in our folders. We may not perform it, but we can at least read it for learning purposes,” my band director said. I distinctly recall that moment being particularly disappointing. I couldn't just leave a piece like *Lincolnshire* in my folder to sit around, serving as a “learning” opportunity. So I didn't.

Instead I worked on the music at home or before band class when I had a few extra minutes of practice time, just for fun. It was a struggle at first, but soon enough I was playing through the music relatively smoothly. I often listened to the song on the bus to school, and thus it was frequently stuck in my head during the day.

We read the suite again after our district festival concert. We must have impressed our director, because reading it during class became less of a, “Let’s just see how we do,” and more of a “Maybe we can pull this off,” scenario. Gradually the piece became a less stressful experience as the band became more accustomed and familiar with the piece. Over the next few months, I felt myself becoming a better player. My fingers were able to conquer some of the more challenging fingerings, and my mind was able to focus on both technique and musicality. Soon enough we were competing with *Lincolnshire* in Atlanta, Georgia, on our annual Spring trip.

Something clicked during that performance. After the first downbeat, I felt myself gradually becoming emotionally submerged within the music. I could feel the chords coursing through my body as I played like I had never played before. The band was in sync, and we were unstoppable. The auditorium filled with sounds I had never heard before. The entire suite built and built, finally climaxing at the end of the sixth movement and as the final metallic crescendo cut off, chills shot down my spine. As I stood on that stage with weak knees, trying to bring myself back to reality, I knew music *must* be a part of my life forever.

That performance lives on in infamy among the members of the 2005-2006 Symphonic Band. We all grew immensely as players, and gained confidence to overcome challenges. We also became better friends. I know that I was not the only one who had a deep connection with *Lincolnshire* that day in Atlanta. Perhaps that very moment, set up by the months leading to the competition, sparked a special bond between us all, because it was obvious the band had changed after we returned to Fairfax. We were proud of ourselves and gained a new drive for perfection. Some say our Spring concert was even better than our competitive concert in Atlanta.

Due to my struggles in Symphonic Band freshman year, I developed a deeper understanding of music, my bassoon, my friends and myself. *Lincolnshire Posy* has changed my life, and will always bring back the best of memories. I would not change a single thing about my experience. It was too much fun.