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Don't ever, ever, ever, ever, give up| Timothy Aston in recital with family, friends, colleagues, and students

Timothy P. Aston
The University of Montana

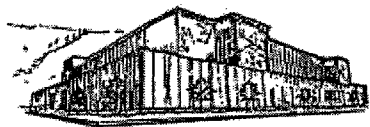
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Don't Ever, Ever, Ever, Ever, Give Up:
Timothy Aston in Recital
with
Family, Friends, Colleagues, and Students

by
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B.S., Central Connecticut State University - New Britain, Conn. 1975

presented in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Fine Arts - Integrated Arts and Education
The University Of Montana
2002

Approved by



Chairman



Dean, Graduate School

7-26-02

Date

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Master of Arts in Fine Arts, Intergrated Arts and Education

Don't Ever, Ever, Ever, Ever, Give Up: Timothy Aston in Recital with
Family, Friends, Colleagues, and Students.

August 2002

Dr. Randy Bolton



The Recital was a celebration and culmination of my efforts to complete a Master's Degree. As with anything associated with "The Creative Pulse" the degree of risk, intensity, and rigor was very high. That is one of the reasons that I chose to do a recital. I have never attempted anything of this nature before. The variety and scope of the styles and types of music and ensembles was intentionally diverse. It is a reflection of all that I am and do. Each piece performed and the people who performed them were carefully chosen for their significance in my life. I had to include Family, Friends, Colleagues, and Students in the recital because without them my journey would not have happened.

This journey, or more accurately quest, to complete a Master's Degree has taken fifteen years, two different Universities, and three attempts to start and complete a graduate program. Many people have mentored, encouraged, and supported me. In a fashion, the recital was an extended teaching. The moral of it all: "Don't ever, ever, ever, ever, give up!"

The Recital was a great success. At least the extended standing ovation that followed the last piece would indicate so. I do not and cannot accept sole credit for that. It was the epitome of a group effort. Many of the participants contributed wonderful suggestions and advice that was incorporated into the culminating recital.

The Recital, and all that it entailed, has come and gone, but not the family, friends, colleagues, and students, the music, or the teaching. In that sense the Recital continues on even better than before.

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Don't Ever, Ever, Ever, Ever, Give Up:
Timothy Aston in Recital
with
Family, Friends, Colleagues, and Students

A Restatement of Project Intent

The original intent/ purpose of the project was to prepare and present a music and creative movement recital. This recital would include solo works by myself and pieces involving family, friends, colleagues, and students. There are four parts to the project:

1. To document and footprint all parts of the logistics of putting together a recital. This included selection of the ensembles to participate and musical pieces to be performed, development of the creative movement pieces, programming the order of the ensembles and pieces, setting up rehearsal times and places for the various ensembles, negotiating a date and time that all participants would be able to attend, selecting of an appropriate venue to perform the recital (this included the need for stage lighting effects, adequate space to perform in with a minimum of equipment movement and adequate comfortable seating), and preparing a printed program for the recital.
2. To model and demonstrate to the students that their teachers can perform and practice what they teach. It is not often that students get to observe their teachers in performance situations outside of the school setting. It allowed the student ensembles to be in a very different performance setting from their usual school gym concerts. I hoped that they would rise to

the occasion and elevate their level of performance.

3. To reestablish and gain back some of my performance skills and endurance on the trombone and also to expand my abilities on the xylophone and drum set. At the same time I wanted to explore and develop the creative movements to be performed. I also intended to introduce and include some of the Brain Gym exercises in my band classes as one means of using bodily/ kinesthetic movement in a large class to help stimulate awareness and learning.
4. To celebrate the opportunities and privileges that I have to teach and play music. I believe that I am very fortunate and blessed to have my family, friends, colleagues, and students. I do not take these circumstances for granted.

A Statement of what was actually Achieved and Accomplished

I presented a ninety minute long music and creative movement recital involving over fifty participants performing fifteen pieces of instrumental music including two creative movement pieces. The performers' ages ranged from my seven year old grand daughter up to a seventy-plus year old retired university professor. The grade levels of the students involved were elementary, middle school, high school, and university. The musical pieces performed ranged from solo works to large ensemble. The styles of music included classical, contemporary, a Christmas carol, novelty, sacred hymn, and jazz.

The overall structure of the recital was in three stages: solo pieces by me, pieces involving students and family members, and pieces involving adult colleagues, peers, and friends. The order of program for the recital began with my

solo works on trombone and xylophone followed by two duets involving the high school students. The first duet was on trombone with a sophomore private trombone student of mine, Miss Iris Wall. The second was a flute duet performed by two high school students, Miss E'lise Chard and Miss Kristin Sikkink. This flute duet was performed as an accompaniment to a creative hand movement done in ultra-violet (black) light. I was joined in the hand movement by my adult daughter, Elizabeth Rolle, and her seven year old daughter (my grand daughter) Brielle Rolle.

After a short intermission, a large middle school student ensemble, The All-City Winds, performed three pieces conducted by myself and colleagues Cliff Goodman and John Schuberg. This was followed by a small adult group of my band teacher colleagues and myself performing a jazz piece. I did a short creative movement piece using my a body as a percussive instrument with an audience participation ending. The audience participation portion of the piece included the moral and title of the recital; "Don't Ever, Ever, Ever, Ever, Give up!" The Montana Trombone Chorale performed three pieces and the recital ended with the music worship team from the church where the recital was held playing two worship choruses.

The performance was a celebration of completing a significant requirement for a Master's degree and a gathering of family, friends, colleagues, and students to make music together in a slightly more formal setting than normal. The performance and intentions of the recital not only occurred as I had planned but more importantly as I had hoped.

The main intent and essence of the recital was to demonstrate the importance, to me, of my relationships with family, friends, colleagues, and students, not only in making music and teaching, but in all aspects of life. It also involved

aspects of great risk and irrevocability, particularly in the creative movements.

The idea of bringing so many people and different groups together strikes me as very ambitious and forward. Their only motivation to participate was that I asked them and said, "please?" The enthusiastic willingness of all the participants to accept the invitation was both humbling and a great honor to me. I, and they, knew ahead of time that this was not just another performance to schedule into their already busy lives. Most of the people were aware of the significance of the depth of my desire to finish a master's degree.

A statement of expected and unexpected results

I chose to perform a recital with family, friends, colleagues, and students. I expected that the Missoula Alliance Church sanctuary would be an adequate performance facility and appropriate venue. I planned the recital to last about an hour, with an audience of approximately one hundred people including the participants, my family, friends, some parents of the younger students, some classmates from the Creative Pulse, and hopefully at least one faculty member from the Creative Pulse. I expected that there would be at least one major obstacle that would not be resolved and that I would have to make some significant changes to the program. With as many people involved in the recital as there were, I expected that there would be a few not able to make the performance for any number of reasons.

The overall results of the outcome of the recital far exceeded my initial expectations. Of all my expectations, only two ended up being what I expected, performing with family, friends, colleagues, and students, and the church facilities being an appropriate performance venue.

It was always my intention to include family, friends, colleagues, and students in the project. I did not even once think of attempting this without including some representatives from each group. This was the essence of the recital, sharing the experience of making and performing music with other musicians. From this perspective, this is what I had hoped for and expected to occur, and it did.

As I was considering where to hold the recital, the Missoula Alliance Church facilities seemed about as perfect as I could hope for. Some of the criteria for the performance venue included availability for use, the size and dimensions of the stage/performance area(s), lighting, acoustics, and audience seating. The church sanctuary stage area was designed not only as a speaking platform but also for baptisms, musical, and dramatic performances. It was large enough for ample space to perform and to handle all the instruments, equipment, and props that I used on the stage during the performance without the stage appearing to be cluttered or visually distracting.

The open area between the first row of pews and the front of the stage was large enough to accommodate the entire set up of the middle school ensemble thereby avoiding undue long periods of rearranging chairs and equipment during the performance. There was special lighting covering the entire stage, with presets for highlighting discrete smaller areas of the stage as well as the entire stage. The acoustic characteristics of the sanctuary were very conducive to an acoustical performance with little or no electrical amplification needed. Except for the opening two trombone solos using a computer assisted accompaniment system, the recital was performed acoustically.

The shape of the room and arrangement of the pews allowed for good audience viewing and listening anywhere in the sanctuary. Also, the pews were

spacious, upholstered, and cushioned which made them comfortable.

This is the church that I belong to and attend every Sunday. I felt confident in my relationship with the music/ worship pastor, Scott Brooks, that if I asked to use the church for the recital we could work out an arrangement. The only surprise, which was a pleasant one, came when I made my request to use the church. The worship pastor's answer was an immediate and enthusiastic yes, with no hesitation. Even the date was open and the church did not charge me the usual building use fee. This is very out of the ordinary and I did not expect this.

The intended and expected length of the recital was to be no more than an hour. Having been a public school band teacher for the past twenty six years has given me a great deal of experience in the timing of school concerts, and rarely am I off by more than fifteen minutes in estimating the length of a performance. That evening I was off by more than thirty minutes. During the second half of the recital I announced to the audience that I would abbreviate the length of one of the pieces because it was at that point that I realized that the recital was running way beyond the intended hour. I did not want people in the audience to feel obligated to stay to be polite and also the middle school students would need to get home to do homework and get to bed. To my utter and total surprise at the end of the recital not only had very few people left but the performers received a very warm standing ovation. I later confirmed with several friends that indeed very few people had left and that the audience was attentive up to the end of the recital. This floored me. I never imagined that the recital would be so well received.

The size and composition of the audience exceeded my expectations. As the time for the recital approached I was shocked by the number people enter-

ing the church. I had originally estimated a hundred people attending; quite possibly twice that number were there that evening.

The only relatives of mine who were able to attend were my immediate family. This includes my wife Jayne and our four adult children James, Elizabeth, Kathryn, and Eryn. James is married with two young sons and lives in Oak Harbor on Whidbey Island, Washington. Elizabeth is married with four young children and lives here in Missoula. Kathryn is unmarried and lives in Kearney, Nebraska and Eryn is unmarried and lives in Bozeman, Montana. James traveled from Whidbey Island with his wife and their two young sons to surprise me with their presence. My daughter Elizabeth and her daughter Brielle were performers in the recital. Her husband, Jimmy, undertook the duties of babysitter for the younger grandchildren. Eryn drove up from Bozeman for the evening. Only one of my children, Kathryn, was unable to attend the concert. In her stead Eryn brought Kathryn's high school senior portrait and put it next to her on the pew. One would think that this would not be very significant, but that silly gesture, intended to be humorous, touched me very deeply. It meant a great deal to me to have my wife and all my children present in spirit if not in body. My relationship with my family is very, very important to me.

Aside from the friends in the Missoula area, several old friends traveled from Bozeman, Livingston, Townsend, Helena, and Kalispell. I was honored and humbled. I had not seen some of these folks in a long time. The significance of the fact that they made the journey on a weekday flattered me; nor did I take for granted that they would have come just for the recital itself.

Another surprise was the number of Creative Pulse classmates and faculty who attended. As a courtesy I mailed out thirty invitations to all the Creative Pulse people for whom I had addresses. I also invited three faculty mem-

bers. After the recital, Dr. Randy Bolton told me that he had counted twenty students from the Creative Pulse. It seemed like they all made a point of congratulating me before they left which was overwhelming. All three of the faculty I had invited came: Karen Kaufmann, Dorothy Morrison, and Randy Bolton. Their attendance encouraged me and gave me a feeling that the recital had a higher degree of credibility and authenticity.

In the days following the recital, I received many complimentary notes and phone calls from the parents of the all-city students. What struck me about this is the number of parents who must have been there that evening. I was only expecting a few parents to show up. Usually, for convenience's sake, many of the parents get together and form car pools to shuttle their children around to all the concerts or just drop their children off and pick them up after the concert. Apparently, that did not happen that evening. Most of the parents came and stayed for the entire performance. This was different from the norm.

The last group of people in the audience who touched me deeply were my former middle school students and some of their parents. Most of these students were in high school and a couple were in college. Their presence was especially gratifying to me, if only to know that I had been enough of an influence in their lives that they would honor me by attending the recital and then coming up after to let me know that they had been there. That was incredibly special.

I am very happy and even more surprised to state that I did not have any major problems to deal with. There were no serious interruptions to the flow of the recital. All the equipment and instruments worked correctly. All but one of the members of the ensembles were present and each group performed at the appropriate time. There were several situations that could have gone awry but each turned out fine. I attribute this lack of problems to: my previous experience

as a band teacher and performer, paying close attention to detailed planning, constantly checking and rechecking with my colleagues, John and Cliff, and seeking suggestions and advice from several other colleagues and friends. Simply put, this recital could not have occurred without their valuable contributions.

The selection of which day of the week to present the recital, more than the calendar date ended up being the most challenging aspect of the whole process. Basically, it was a scheduling conflict. That was due to the two large ensembles involved and getting their directors together to work out a mutually acceptable weekday.

The only other significant situation was one involving the original two high school girls I had invited to perform the flute duet accompanying the hand movement. Whitney Tuxbury had oral surgery to remove her wisdom teeth two weeks before the recital. She suffered some minor complications and severe swelling of her lower jaw which prevented her from participating in the recital. Her partner E`lise took it upon herself to recruit another accomplished flute player, Kristin, who also happened to be a former C.S. Porter band student. She was willing to step up and learn the music and then rehearse it as a duet all within a week of the performance. Not only did she accomplish this goal, she did it very well.

The last expectation was one of attendance of all the participants. I was concerned that a few people would be absent from the recital. The more people involved in any type of event increases the probability of someone missing the event. There was only one person who did not make the performance due to an illness. One of the flute players in the All-City Winds was absent and wrote me a short note of apology for getting sick the evening of the recital. I told her in re-

sponse that we missed her in the Winds and I was sorry that she had taken ill and was unable to perform with us.

Upon reflecting about these last expectations of a major obstacle and the attendance, I believe it to be unrealistic to expect everything to work out perfectly and to experience no problems. Although it is an idealistic desire, it is rarely the real outcome. Through my years of teaching and putting on concerts, I have learned that almost anything can happen just before or during any concert or performance. This recital came about as close to perfection and fulfilling my expectations as I could wish. There were some very small glitches and a few missed and out of tune notes during the performance but the evening was not about the perfection of playing the music. It was about some very special people getting together and making music with and for each other. That is the greatest and highest expectation of all and it was achieved. Way Cool!

An Assessment of the Significance of the Recital

All the elements of the recital were carefully thought out and considered for their significance to me. There was much personal history involved in the planning and selection process. I knew that I would include trombone and percussion solo pieces. My first love and passion, musically, is the trombone, followed closely by percussion.

The two trombone solos I performed at the opening of the recital date back to my undergraduate and high school days. There are many good solos that I could have chosen that would have been just as appropriate to program on the recital. However, they lacked the personal value and significance of the two that I chose.

I wanted to demonstrate the use of computer technology in music education and solo performances. Rather than use a live piano accompanist for these solos, I used a computer assisted accompaniment system. This system goes beyond just being a recording to play along with. The system called Smart Music is programmed to actually listen to and follow the soloist and make adjustments in tempo and wait for specific and correct pitches in some of the entrances of the soloist.

The first solo, "Allegro Vivace" by Rimski-Korsokov, was my first solo for a performance in front of a jury of music professors during my sophomore year in college. My music school did not allow recitals by music education majors. Even if I had wanted to present a recital, I could not because of our school policy. In the Spring semester of my sophomore year, I and several other music students lined up outside the auditorium and each in turn walked onto the stage announced ourselves and our piece, performed it and then left. That was it. I remember feeling a combination of relief and disappointment: the relief of having the jury over with and the disappointment from a sense of being cheated or short changed. That's all? No applause, no interview, no questions of how I approached the preparation of the piece or why I chose that particular solo. No verbal comments about the performance or constructive criticism of technique. Just, "Thank you, next". That bothered me a great deal and I wondered why I bothered. All that work and it's just another requirement to fulfill for the degree.

The second solo, "Love Thoughts" by Arthur Pryor, was the first full solo I prepared as a senior in high school. Its style is much more lyrical and melodious and is a nice contrast to the "Allegro Vivace". It was also the audition material for our all-state band auditions that year. These were live auditions in front of audition adjudicators. I was very proud of how hard I worked on the solo. After

the audition my band director, Mr. Harold Crump, came up to me and told me how well I did and that he thought I would be selected for the all-state band. I was not selected for the band. It was a big shock and disappointment to both me and my director. Mr. Crump was my first mentor and my inspiration to become a music teacher. He is still my hero even to this day.

In both cases, I experienced great disappointment and felt a deep frustration. I worked very hard on those solos and it seemed at the time all that effort was for nothing. Not anymore. I know that these negative experiences, however disappointing, did not diminish my love for making music or wanting to be a music teacher. Maybe these were the first times I subconsciously felt, Don't Ever Give Up! This recital, and in particular these two solos, were a vindication of those previous experiences from so long ago.

Percussion has become a passion of mine. I have loved playing drums and other percussion instruments as far back as I can remember. In the years since I moved to Missoula, I have become even more intrigued with percussion instruments and have had many opportunities to explore different types of percussion. Dorothy Morrison's West African Drum Class is a prime example. We got to play new and different drums and learn new rhythms from a different culture. As a result of this, I selected several pieces that included percussion for the recital. The most significant percussion piece was the xylophone ragtime solo, "The Whistler".

This one area of percussion, the mallet keyboard instruments, has become the focus of my interest. These include the orchestra bells, xylophone, vibraphone, and marimba. In April, 2001, I had the opportunity to perform a short xylophone solo with The Missoula Community Band during their spring concert. I had never performed on a xylophone in public before and I had a very enjoy-

able and positive experience. This experience inspired me to include a full xylophone solo in the recital. The next step was to find a solo that would be challenging to prepare and at the same time be playable within my ability. A good friend and colleague, Rich Brinkman, a percussion performance major and music store representative, suggested the ragtime solos of George Hamilton Green. This turned out to be an wonderful suggestion. "The Whistler" was challenging to prepare and was also a good musical contrast to the other solos I was preparing. Rich was very generous with his expertise and guidance as he helped me develop and improve my mallet techniques. It was an upbeat rag and fun to play. For this solo I wanted and needed a live piano accompanist and I knew exactly who I wanted to ask.

I know many fine piano players who were more than adequate for the task but my first choice was my teaching partner and orchestra teacher, Chris Wallace. We are good friends and close colleagues. Chris and I have taught instrumental music at the same schools for the past ten years. We quite often car pool together from one school to the next. She has been a source of encouragement and support to me as I have worked through the Creative Pulse program. When I invited her to be my accompanist her immediate reply, like everyone else I asked to participate in the recital, was yes.

The trombone duet with Iris Wall was actually one of the last pieces I included in the recital. The idea of performing a duet with a student was not the reason I chose to include Iris. It was Iris herself or more specifically her character. I have been her private trombone instructor for the past four years. Iris, her parents, and I have grown close as friends over the years. She is much more than a private student to me. What spoke to me about her and in one sense has encouraged me personally was that as a seventh grade student she decided

that she wanted to switch instruments from cello to trombone. Many young students switch instruments seeking to find the instrument that best suits them and this is not unusual or uncommon. What intrigued me about Iris's decision was why she wanted to switch. She had developed a strong desire to play in a jazz band and pep band by the time she would reach high school. The cello is one instrument that is rarely if ever included in groups of this nature.

She knew as a seventh grader that she would have to attain a certain level of ability to be able to audition for and be accepted into either of these groups. She took it upon herself to write a short letter of request to me to accept her as a private student. When I called her to set up a time and day for lessons she told me why she was switching. This immediately struck me as unusual for a student this young to have long range goals and to implement a means to accomplish them. She worked hard on her playing technique and it paid off for her. As an eighth grader she auditioned for and was accepted into the elementary school district's All-City Jazz Band and for the past two years has been a member of the Hellgate High School Pep Band. As we worked together towards each goal, she would stay on track and maintain her focus on the goal. Her perseverance was a model and inspiration for me to follow.

The creative hand movement with flute duet accompaniment was the most complex and challenging piece to develop and prepare. It was a unique and different type of performance piece in the recital. It was also my favorite piece and the one that I hoped would be the pinnacle of the recital. I felt this way due to the fact that I put more of myself and effort into the development of this than any other single piece on the recital. Because of its uniqueness, I knew nobody in the audience would know what to expect. I was very much looking forward to its performance. This piece was a direct result of the defining moment of

my experience in the Creative Pulse.

It occurred during the creative movement apprenticeship in the Creative Pulse. I have been athletic all my life and am blessed with very good coordination, but I have never been comfortable with dancing. As far back as I can recall I have always been extremely self-conscious about it. As a music teacher, band director, and conductor I have been told that I have expressive hand conducting motions and have no problem with feeling foolish or embarrassed about waving my hands and arms around to conduct a piece of music. Call it dancing or even creative movement and I lock up tight. Needless to say, I was apprehensive about this class.

The class was led through a guided imagery exercise by Karen Kaufmann. We were lying on the floor of the dance studio, I was looking up at the ceiling as Karen was speaking and then I felt my body just sink into the floor. This feeling or an inner knowing came over me and I knew it was okay to move and be in my body. It was a big surprise but very pleasant. Right then I experienced an enlightenment beyond being comfortable to move and be in my body. It was a confidence that grew beyond feeling okay with creative movement. I knew I could do this (creative movement). I remember thinking, "this is not only going to be okay but I am going to do this well. I will not worry or feel self-conscious about myself or what I think others may be thinking about me." I felt a tremendous sense of relief. From this sense of relief a feeling of freedom began to grow. My thoughts continued, "okay, what can I do with this feeling of new found freedom of movement?" The answer came in the form of creative hand movements.

My first attempt at this creative hand movement occurred two weeks later in a class instructed by Dorothy Morrison on symbol systems. As a final individ-

ual project for the class, Dorothy assigned the class to pick one of two recorded musical examples and interpret the piece in some other manner (symbol system) creating a new world from an existing world. Both examples were foreign and very unfamiliar in style and content. Dorothy later told us that one was a Japanese classical flute solo and the other was a gypsy wedding lament sung to the bride at the wedding. I chose the gypsy lament.

The music consisted of a small instrument ensemble accompanying a female solo voice. The music was intense and powerful, particularly the woman's singing. The passion and intensity of her tone were evident without knowing the words of the language she was singing in. It inspired in me great emotion and feeling. I was immediately drawn to it over the other recording.

To perform this I dressed all in black and wore a pale gray set of gloves. The lighting was lowered to almost complete darkness with only a single spot. I stood at the edge of the lit area and tried to position my hands so that the light caught them only and would highlight them as much as possible while the rest of me hopefully would be lost in the background. I had no idea how this would turn out. After a couple of false starts, due to some sound system volume setting problems, I got into the performance and the next thing I knew it was over. I truly do not remember exactly what I did. It just flowed out of me. Afterwards, Bolton Rothwell, a teaching assistant came up to me and said, "Man, you were out of yourself. You were totally lost in the performance." This made me feel really good. Dorothy wrote a brief note to me about the interpretation of a world remade. It was complimentary and encouraged me greatly. Between Bolton's comments and Dorothy's note I started thinking maybe there was something here worth pursuing as a performance medium.

As I was writing up my final project recital proposal, I knew I would in-

clude a hand movement piece. I had no concrete ideas of how or what I might do, except that it would be performed in ultra-violet (black) light. The concept was very intriguing and merited further investigation and contemplation during the school year. I also knew that I wanted live music to perform with, not a recording. Rather than react to a prerecorded piece of music, I wanted to interact with live performers. The movements would be defined and created from the way the performers interpreted whatever piece of music would be used. E`lise Chard and Whitney Tuxbury, as a flute duet, came to mind immediately as the live musical accompanist. As former middle school band students of mine, they were very special to me and we had developed a close student/ teacher relationship. I had kept close contact with both of them through their High School years and both had developed into highly accomplished flutists. They both willingly accepted my invitation to participate. The idea of performing in black light was a natural next step to give the hands even more emphasis and take the rest of me out the scene entirely.

The next two challenges were selecting an appropriate piece of music and learning more about performing in black light. John Schuberg and Cliff Goodman, two of my closest friends and band teacher colleagues, provided the solutions to both of these situations. As it turned out, I shared every aspect of the planning process with these men. Quite often they could not grasp the entire picture I had but they were always supportive and encouraging.

Concerning the selection of the duet music , my first thoughts were along the lines of something contemporary but not avant garde. I wanted the music to be listenable without being so different as to be distracting to the hand movement. At first, I asked E`lise if she had any favorite duets that would fall in that category and she said, " no, all her favorites were older classical pieces". I

thought I wanted something newer with more drive and an upbeat feel to it. I set aside the music selection process for a while and concentrated on other areas of the recital.

When I turned my attention back to considering musical pieces, I asked John what he thought and he immediately suggested the Telemann canonic flute duets. We ran that past his wife, Maggie, who is the flute instructor at the University, and she heartily agreed. Initially, I was skeptical still wanting to hold onto the contemporary upbeat angle. She lent me a printed copy of all six duets and John marked his favorite ones. Maggie was kind enough to make an excellent recording with one of her university flute students. As I listened to the recording, the music grew on me and finally I selected two movements to use. When I told E`lise what I had chosen she said that she knew both pieces well and the 1st movement was one of her favorites. Okay, I thought, that is a bit of a strange coincidence.

E`lise and Whitney had played duets together many times. They were familiar with and confident in each other's style of playing. I sat in on a couple of their rehearsal sessions and gained complete confidence in their performance abilities. Two weeks before the recital, Whitney developed some minor complications from oral surgery and had to drop out of the recital. This turned out to be the only unexpected situation to develop in the whole planning process. E`lise saved the day by taking the initiative and recruiting Kristin Sikkink and putting the duet back together in time for the performance.

Concerning the black light effects, Cliff suggested I speak with his older son, Ben, a freshman at Hellgate H.S., who was involved with The Freeway Puppet Club that used black light effects frequently. The amount of technical knowledge that Ben had accumulated in the relatively short time he had been

involved with the puppet club amazed me. I am always encouraged to witness young people who have a passion and deep interest in a field of study or art form who dive into learning as much as they can about the topic. In this case, Ben was definitely the teacher and I the student. On several occasions, as we worked on technical aspects of what I wanted to accomplish, Ben would offer suggestions of adding elaborate special props or pyrotechnics. Sometimes it was hard to hold Ben back. I had to remind him several times that this was only part of a recital and not an entire black light show. His enthusiasm for helping me was a humorous and wonderful source of encouragement and energy. The director of the club, Carrie Jones, was generous in loaning me several black light sets, stands, black puppeteer hoods, white gloves, even special ordering some for my granddaughter, and the black back drop curtains. I am grateful to her and The Freeway Puppet Club.

The actual choreography involved in the hand movement is based on musical conducting techniques. The motions are more exaggerated and expressive than usual and the normal tempo/meter patterns are avoided. There is extensive use of mirroring the movements in both hands. Each hand does the exact opposite motion as in looking in a mirror. This technique is usually not recommended when conducting a group; however, it makes for great visual effects. Along with the mirror motion is a similar motion that could be called a copy motion. Both hands move in the same direction and do the same gestures. A third motion could be called a canon or echo effect. One hand makes a distinct motion while the other hand remains still or uses a diminished motion and then the hands switch motions. Most of the gestures would fall under a cueing technique, as in bringing in a voice or instrument part at the appropriate time in a piece of music. Because most conductors do not move very far from one spot in

front of their group, in this type of hand movement the body is fairly stationary. That was my original concept of how I developed the basic movements.

For the second movement of the hand piece, I had invited my oldest daughter, Elizabeth, and her oldest daughter (my granddaughter), Brielle, to join me on stage. There was an element of surprise intended by having other sets of hands appear at the beginning of the second movement with no prior warning. My second daughter, Kathryn, suggested to me that I should move around the stage and use more space. I took that suggestion and added more hands to it. Who better than family members to be the other hands? Elizabeth had studied classical ballet and some modern dance and so I asked her to choreograph the second movement. I immediately noticed a difference in her choreographic approach to the movements. She incorporated much more use of the high and low spaces (planes) above the head and below the waist. Her motions were much more dance-like in that they did not follow the music so much as they were an interpretation of the music. She also, without any coaching or suggestions from me, used the whole stage area and had placed Brielle on the other side of the stage. We had to relocate and change our body positions and move to other areas of the stage. Again, I thought, this is another strange coincidence, in that she would develop movements that would contrast and yet compliment my style of movements. We are bordering on serendipity here. Neat things were happening that were unanticipated and unlooked for. Time for another Way Cool.

At the beginning of the school year I informed John, Cliff, and Gretchen, our fourth middle school band director, that I had submitted a proposal to do a recital as a final project. All of them thought it was a great idea and John immediately suggested having one of our All-City groups perform in the recital. This

would be a demonstration of one facet of my teaching and directing responsibilities involving students. I had been thinking about that but had not mentioned it to the other directors. At the same time I was trying to think of ways to involve John, Cliff, and Gretchen in the recital. The All-City Winds ended up being the solution to include middle school students. The Middle School Band Buddies Combo ended up being the solution to getting all my middle school colleagues up on stage and performing with me. It has been my desire for several years to get together and perform publicly with them. This was the opportunity to fulfill that desire. It also had the added bonus of performing in front of our middle school students. Teachers performing for their students is something not often done.

Missoula County Public Schools District #1 is the K-8 elementary school district portion of the unified school district. In our school district music program we have several performing honor groups from each area of music: vocal, orchestra, (strings), and Band (wind and percussion). These groups are open to all District #1 students in the 7th and 8th grades. Entrance into any of these groups is by audition only. The intent of these groups is to offer a more advanced level of musical performance and literature to middle school students who have a deeper desire to improve and progress in their musical pursuit. The All-City Winds is one of these groups. It consists of most of the instruments in the woodwind family, some selected brass and percussion. The instrumentation is as follows: piccolo, flute, oboe, bassoon, B flat soprano clarinet, B flat bass clarinet, alto saxophone, and tenor saxophone, French horns, one baritone, one tuba, and two percussionists. Up until five years ago all four of the middle school band directors co-directed the two band honor groups. The other honor band group is the All-City Jazz Band. Gretchen chose to withdraw from directing

the All-City groups to devote more time to her family. Since then John, Cliff, and I have co-directed these two groups.

I chose the All-City Winds to be in the recital because they have slightly less equipment to haul and generally are easier to accommodate and I felt their style of music and the nature of their sound would better fit in the recital. The previous spring I had commissioned Dr. Jim Eversole to compose a concert piece for the Winds and knew that Dr. Eversole would be present at the recital as a listener and performer in the Trombone Chorale. The Winds rose to the occasion and played one of their best concert performances of the year. I was so proud of them and grateful that they were all so willing to do this concert for me. Having John, Cliff, and Gretchen there to take care of so many little details with the Winds was tremendous. We have done this so long together that there is a trust and confidence in each others' abilities that most audience members do not notice the smoothness with which events transpire. This relationship we share is no small thing nor does it occur by accident.

At this point, I need to elaborate on this relationship. The four Missoula middle school band teachers share a unique professional and personal relationship. We have discussed this phenomenon on many occasions and all agree that we are a part of something special. We respect and admire each other's abilities and talents and have grown close as friends. The fact that, on a personal basis, we enjoy each others' company and get along with each other with little or no serious conflicts is itself noteworthy. Professionally, the slogan, "one for all and all for one" takes on significant meaning and could be used to describe our working relationship. The nature of our band program is such that throughout the school year we have many annually scheduled concerts and events that combine our school bands together. This is itself a unique feature. We

refer to these as all-district events.

Probably the most notable of these is the 7th and 8th grade middle school Red Wave Marching Band. It has approximately 480 students who participate in the University of Montana's Homecoming Parade every fall. Nobody we know does anything on a scale this large annually and lives to tell about it. Think about it -- that many middle school students in close proximity to each other armed with a variety of loud noise makers, including forty drummers, and only four band directors to make it happen. Who would want to? That is the point. We do. Why? Because, as a team, we have developed a system that allows each one of us to teach to our individual strengths. We trust and rely on each other to cover those specific areas so that each one of us is not trying to do everything at once. When we put it all together, we get an excellent final result. We have an extremely large group of middle school students that march reasonably well, sound great, and can get from one end to the other of a parade route intact. This is only one example of many events that we do through out every school year.

The key to our relationship is we willingly combine our talents and strengths to the mutual benefit of each of us and ultimately the benefit of our students and our programs. We continually communicate and share new knowledge and techniques with each other. This allows us to teach more effectively in our individual schools. Due to our mutual respect and trust, we support each other's programs and can truly enjoy each other's success. We choose to do this rather than running our programs separately and thereby run the risk of becoming territorial and possessive with our individual programs.

This leads me to the Middle School Band Buddies Combo. This was my second favorite performance, next to the hand movement piece. It is not often or

not often enough that students have an opportunity to observe and watch their teachers perform and actually ply their trade and art form. This was a must for me to get all the middle school band teachers to perform together. In the twelve years that I have taught in Missoula we never once had a chance to make music together, to actually prepare a piece and perform publicly.

Once in a great while we might jam for a short while after an all-city rehearsal or participate in a novelty holiday season instrumental ensemble, but that would be the extent of playing together. I really wanted to show our students and the rest of the audience that we are good performing musicians and that we can perform well together.

When the recital had reached the point that it was time to perform with The Band Buddies Combo, things had gone so well from my perspective that I was really starting to relax and enjoy myself. I almost had too good a time. As we were setting up for our Band Buddies piece after the Winds performance, Cliff gave a short impromptu speech. It caught me off-guard and by surprise, so much so, that all I could do was sit there on the drum set and listen. He said a lot of nice things about me, the recital, our relationship, and the fact that everything about the recital was based on my relationships with everybody involved. This was hard for me to listen to. I very much appreciated the testimony but I am not one who likes being in the spotlight in this manner. I will address more on this issue of relationships and interpersonal abilities later in the paper.

Several weeks later following the recital, I asked the All-City Winds members if they each would write a short statement of what it meant to them to participate in a concert of this nature and what they thought of watching their band teachers perform. Almost all the students responded and their answers were very candid, forthright, and positive. From those responses, the two most com-

mon words that appeared were Cool and Awesome. From their adolescent perspective, I took those words as high honors. Most of the students thought that watching their teachers perform was unusual and a good thing. Many also commented on the privilege of belonging to an honor ensemble and how much it meant to them to be able to participate in an advanced group of this nature. I have included a few of these hand written responses in the Appendix.

The Creative Rhythmic Movement: "A`la Stomp" with a Moral was intended as a humorous novelty piece with a genuine and sincere ending. I thought that one short creative movement piece to show that I could attempt something sort of like dancing without really dancing and put a point to it would be a good thing.

To set up the audience participation part of the piece, I read from a prepared script my personal history of why I wanted a master's degree. The audience participation ending to "A`la Stomp" was an attempt to bring home the fact that if you give up or don't even try, you are defeated. Whatever you were attempting to accomplish is gone and your efforts were futile. I heard a quote once: "A man's reach exceeds his grasp". By not giving up, even if you don't achieve your goal as intended, you have still accomplished something through your efforts and determination (process). This is totally true and accurate in my own quest and journey to finish a master's degree.

I saw a cartoon several years ago at a friend's log home at Clearwater Junction. This cartoon was the inspiration for the rhythmic chant and hence the title of the recital. It is a crude cartoon drawing of a water fowl that has a frog in its bill. The frog, half way down the bird's bill, has reached out of the bird's bill with its front legs and has a strangle hold on the bird's neck. The caption aptly reads, "Don't ever give up." At that time, the caption got me to think and reflect

on whether or not I wanted to finish a master's degree. I had already made two attempts to start a master's program and both had failed for different reasons. I decided then that I would not give up the pursuit of earning my master's degree. I have included a copy of this cartoon and the prepared script in the appendix.

I told the audience that they had to help and participate in this piece. I started them snapping their fingers to a medium tempo. Then I asked them to rhythmically chant, "Don't ever, ever, ever, ever, give up!" As they continued the beat and chant, I spoke of being in a long dark tunnel with only a small light visible a long ways away. I posed a question: is the light a train approaching you, or is it the end of the tunnel? If you want to get out of the tunnel, you have to move toward the light. There are no other options to chose from. You cannot give up. If you do give up you are done. It doesn't matter whether the light is a train coming at you or the end of the tunnel; you will never get out because you gave up. I timed the story line to end on the chant, "Don't ever, ever, ever, ever, give up!" I made a final comment that stated that the light in my tunnel was not a train but was indeed the end and that I was out and had accomplished my quest of finishing a master's degree program at last. That was a powerful moment.

The Montana Trombone Chorale is the only long standing amateur trombone choir in the state of Montana. There are not that many in the country. There is only one reason this group exists today and that is because all the members have a passion for and love of playing their instrument and making music together as a group. I think in any discipline there exists a sense of camaraderie, a sense of belonging to, whether it is in the arts, trades, business, athletics etc. When you share the same talents and interests with someone else, a bond is established. There is such a bond amongst trombone players. It is a fraternal bond. In the case of trombone players it is also like belonging to a circus

clown support group. Nobody takes you seriously and everybody is an irreverent joker. We are serious about playing and music making but after that everything is fair game.

It is because of our seriousness and our fraternal brotherhood bond that I had confidence the Chorale members would want to be a part of the recital. Long before the recital I visited with Fred Luety, the founder of the Chorale, I told him of my intentions to present a recital as a final project. His immediate reply was words to this effect; "That's a great idea and very appropriate for you. When is it? What pieces do you want the Chorale to perform? We need to schedule rehearsals and practice to get ready." From Fred's point of view, which the rest of the Chorale members shared, there was no question or doubt that they would be a part of the recital and support me. The bond within this group is deep and strong.

Dr. Jim Eversole is a retired university music professor, composer, arranger, and performer. He is a member of the Chorale and a friend. He has written and arranged many of the pieces of music that the Chorale plays. I wanted to honor him by performing some of his music. As it turned out, we ended up doing several of his pieces. They were all appropriate and worked very well. Between Dr. Eversole and John Schuberg they composed or arranged most of the music performed by the All-City Winds and the Montana Trombone Chorale. I frequently reflect on the fact that I am involved with so many talented people and how fortunate I am to be associated with them. This is a really good thing and I work at keeping the relationships positive and strong.

The last group to the perform was the worship team of the Missoula Alliance Church that I have the blessing to play with every Sunday morning. This is the church my wife and I attend. This is another significant area of my life. My

faith and belief in God is important to me. I believe and acknowledge that all the talents and abilities I have are gifts from God to me. I try to use these gifts in the best ways possible to honor Him. I have developed a passion for percussion and I love to play drums. For the past several years I have had that honor, privilege, and joy every Sunday morning. To me it is not an obligation nor a duty. It truly is a privilege. On top of that the other people on the team are top musicians themselves. This is a good musical group in its own right. The hymn "Amazing Grace" is of course one of the most well known hymns in the country. As I had hoped many people joined in singing along as the worship team played it. The second song, "Sing for Joy" is a contemporary chorus that I like, not only for its lyrics but also for the upbeat tempo, melody, and style.

How the Recital has Affected me as an Artist/ Teacher

The Creative Pulse is every bit as academic as any other master's program. However, it requires a whole different approach and perspective to research and learning. It does not rely solely on book knowledge or traditional research methods, although that is a foundation. It demands that the student must delve deep inside himself. One's comfort zone of learning and even personal space becomes a thing of the past.

It is the very nature of this program to force the students into areas of their lives, professionally and personally, that are extremely uncomfortable. This is where the growth, understanding, and enlightenment occur. Strength and confidence are gained through forcing one's self to confront a particular issue or fear and work through it. Public performances and presentations are prime examples. The students expose their inner selves and artistry, to their classmates,

instructors, and most importantly to themselves. The degree of rigor and personal risk-taking in this program is unparalleled. Without this program, I never would have dreamed of trying anything like my project, nor would I have had the opportunity or motivation in my life.

I have never been so consumed by and distracted from teaching during the school year as I was with the development and preparation of all the components of this recital, not even when my children were born. The entire recital and all aspects of the planning process hold deep significance for me; the process leading up to the recital more so than the performance itself. I know that that is where my growth as an artist/teacher occurred. So many pieces on the recital were first time efforts for me. I had never done anything like this in my life. The pieces selected and all the participants invited to be a part of the recital were carefully considered for the significance they held in my professional and personal life. The focus of the recital was not on me or my musical performance abilities but rather the *inclusion* of family, friends, colleagues, and students. The essence of the recital was having those specific people participate in the performance that evening with me. Those were the people and groups who figured most prominently in my career and life at this time.

A brief personal profile at this time might clear up some unanswered questions. One of the original seven intelligences of Howard Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences is Interpersonal, (dealing with relationships between people). This is an area where I know I have a gift or highly developed intelligence. My entire personality and teaching style is relationship based. As I was writing this paper, there are several instances where the question, Why, could be asked. Why did all the people who I invited to participate say yes enthusiastically and without hesitation? I was not turned down by anybody. Only two peo-

ple, of those originally invited, did not make the performance and that was due to illness in both cases. Furthermore, in the case of one of these, Whitney Tuxbury, Kristen Sikkink took her place one week before the recital. Why were so many people generous with their resources and why did they go far out of their way to help me research, prepare, and perform this project? I was not charged any fees for any of the consultations, lessons, rehearsal times, use of equipment, or use of the church facilities. Why did the recital performance go off so smoothly, with no appreciable problems or glitches? Part of the answer lies in a lot of hard work, dedication, and preparation by everybody involved but that is not the entire answer. I believe those people, family, friends, colleagues, and students, wanted to help and participate because of my relationship with each and everyone of them. They all were aware of what this endeavor meant to me. They all willingly helped me in anyway that I asked them to. This is not intended to sound arrogant or self-centered, far from it. I put my relationships way ahead of material things or abilities. I continually strive to maintain strong and relevant relationships with everybody in my life. Through the whole process I was continually amazed by everybodies responses. I am deeply grateful to all of them and value our continued relationships even more.

Don't ever, ever, ever, ever, give up!

Appendix A
Program, Cartoon, and Script

A Final Project Graduate Recital

*Presented by
Timothy Aston
with
Family, Friends, Colleagues, & Students*

*for
The
“Creative Pulse”
Master of Fine Arts
Degree Program
University of Montana*

*Tuesday March 26, 2002
7:30 p.m.
Missoula Alliance Church*

Program:

This recital is dedicated to the memory of my mother Ruth E. Aston

Trombone solo:

Allegro Vivace..... N. Rimsky-Korsakoff

Rimsky-Korsakoff was a Russian nationalist composer in the late 19th Century. This is the first movement of his "Concerto for Trombone and Military Band". It has a bold strong opening with a brief lyrical mid section and ends with the opening theme restated.

Xylophone solo:

The Whistler..... George H. Green

George Hamilton Green was considered the best xylophone soloist of his day. The Whistler is a jazz foxtrot rag written by GH Green for the xylophone in the early twentieth century.

Trombone solo:

Love Thoughts.....Arthur Pryor

When he composed this solo, Arthur Pryor was the virtuoso trombone soloist with the John Philip Sousa Band at the turn of the Twentieth Century. The piece is in a bright 3/4 waltz tempo felt in one beat to a measure. There is an extended cadenza in the middle of the solo.

Trombone duet:

Concert Duet 1..... V. Cornette

Miss Iris Wall, a sophomore at Hellgate H.S., joins Mr. Aston as his duet partner.

Creative Hand Movement:

A unique performance of expressive hand motions done in ultraviolet (black) light, set to a Tel-emann canonic flute duet "Sonata #2" movements 1 & 3.

The flute duet is performed by E'lise Chard and Kristin Sikkink, a senior and a junior, respectively, at Big Sky High School.

Intermission

The MCPS All-City Winds:

Incantation and Rowdy Dance..... James Eversole
commissioned for the All-City Winds

The Incredible Shrinking Clarinet.....John Schuberg
Cara McIlmay, clarinet soloist

The Spinning Song.....Ellmenreich/arr. Goodman
** please see the back cover for further background about the Winds.

Middle School Band Buddies Combo:

Cute.....N. Hefti/
.....arr. John Schuberg

This is a premiere performance of the, as yet to be famous, Middle School Band Buddies Combo. This ensemble is comprised of the following distinguished teacher/ performing artists: On Clarinet - Gretchen Murray, Cliff Goodman, John Schuberg;
Drum Set - Tim Aston; guest performer/ student teacher on Electric Bass - Ryan Beck

Creative Rhythmic Movement: a`la "Stomp" with a moral:

This is an audience participation piece. Help me out with this one.

The Montana Trombone Chorale:

When The Saints Go Marching In..... arr. James Eversole

Carol of the Bird (Catalonian Carol)..... trans. Wilbur L. Collins

Music for Athedra The Eighth.....James Eversole

This is a two movement piece: Chorale and Fanfare

** please see the back cover for further background on the Montana Trombone Chorale.

Missoula Alliance Church Worship Team:

Selected songs of celebration and worship. TBA

Reception:

following the recital at the home of Cliff and Catherine Goodman at 806 Dixon Ave. next to the parking lot of the Mormon Church on Bancroft Ave.

All-City Winds members:

Flute: Madison Knowles, Kelsey Toth, Bridget Smith, Katie Rose Hemphill, Rachel Newton, Haily Jacobsen

Oboe: Deborah Natelson, Staci Pederson, Nolan Frame

Bassoon: Peggy Benjamin

Clarinet: Ammon Grosbeck, Jenny Schuberg, Cara McIlInay, Madeline McKiddy, Nathan Ruff,

Tess Melton, Mattie Bossler, Jennifer Herr, Chelsey Maxson

Bass Clarinet: Eric Shell, Kelsey DuBois

Alto Saxophone: Nicole Holyoak, Guy Goodman

Tenor Saxophone: Hannah Rolston

Horn: Tim Kolberg, Jessica Shields, Jesse Adams

Euphonium: Tyler Clark

Tuba: Claire Meinershagen

Percussion: Tarin Richards, Jim Steyee

The All-City Winds is an honor ensemble of thirty (30) 7th & 8th grade middle school students from the four MCPS Middle Schools; Rattlesnake, Meadow Hill, Washington, and C.S. Porter. Cliff Goodman, John Schuberg, and Tim Aston share the privilege and enjoyment of co-directing the group. The students audition in early October and practice only once a week for an hour and fifteen minutes. The music is arranged for this group by John Schuberg and Cliff Goodman. In the spring, the Winds perform several concerts in the local elementary schools and culminate the year with an all day tour of several concerts presented in the schools of the outlying communities.

The Montana Trombone Chorale members:

Fred Luety, Tomi Kent, Jim Eversole, Gary Gillett, Don Gisselbeck, Jason Taylor, Andrew Ueckert, Tim Aston

The Montana Trombone Chorale was formed in 1989 when Missoula area trombone players came together at the home of Mr. Fred Luety. The purpose was to play and enjoy music literature written and/or arranged for trombones. Shortly thereafter the group started to perform in public. The chorale is comprised of up to twelve members, many of whom are music educators in the greater Missoula area or performers in regional symphonies and community bands/ wind ensembles.

The members of the chorale come from a wide variety of backgrounds, including business, financial, bicycle technician, computer technician, and a retired university professor.

The Chorale has given concerts, recitals, and clinics, performed liturgical music for church services, and was chosen to be the opening performing group for the St. Timothy Chapel 2001 Summer Music Festival at Georgetown Lake.

Worship Team members:

Pastor Scott Brooks - Keyboard and lead vocal, Kris Eveland - Keyboard and backup vocal, John Earl - Electric lead guitar, Brenden Jamison - Acoustic rhythm guitar and backup vocal, Mark Heimer - Bass guitar, Tim Aston - drum set.

Thank you:

Words alone cannot fully express my deep appreciation and gratitude towards all the people who have helped me to achieve this evening's recital and near completion of a master degree. Your criticisms, suggestions, kind words, and prayers of encouragement and support have sustained me on many occasions. Although by no means complete, the following list of people and establishments need to be recognized: Jayne Aston (my wife), Elizabeth and Brielle Rolle (my daughter and grand daughter), all of the performers who participated this evening listed above. The Missoula Alliance Church for the use of this facility. Mr. Ben Goodman, Carrie Jones, and The Freeway Puppet Team for their advice and use of the black light equipment. Dr. Randy Bolton, Ms. Karen Kaufmann, and Ms. Dorothy Morrison, my university faculty advisory committee. Rich Brinkman from Morgenroth Music Center, Checkers Barker from Electronic, Sound, and Percussion, and Sherry Linneroth from Eckroth Music. Mr. Carl Smart, former supervisor of the Fine Arts Dept. and Mr. Paul Ritter, present supervisor of the Fine Arts Dept.



Final Project Recital Script

Now I need to share a little personal background and history for all of you. Like some of you, I am the first in my family of four kids, to get this far with college degrees. My older brother is the only other sibling to complete a bachelor's degree in elem. ed. He earned his degree after I had gotten mine.

One of our mother's strongest wishes and desires was to see one or all of her children go to college and on to a master's degree. Up to this point, I'm it. The big drag is my mom passed away in 1996 before I could complete a master's degree. Before she died, I had started a Master's program at MSU in Bozeman in 1987, needless to say she was very proud and always wanted to know how things were going in the program. Unfortunately, in my third and what would have been my final summer session, my family and I moved here to Missoula and I was unable to return to Bozeman to complete the degree because of financial matters, no money.

In 1996, after we were established and settled here in Missoula, I started a summer master's of music ed. program. The first summer went well, but after that things did not work out and I could not finish that program. Moving on, four years later.

Spring 2000. Enter the good Dr. Bolton, who says to me in my school band room office, where he personally had come to talk to me, "Sure, you can do it. We take all sorts and types of students. This program is right up your alley." Okay. What would you think if someone you didn't know said that to you? Hmmm?

So! Here I am, fourteen or fifteen years late depending on how you count it up, and I have almost completed a master's degree. My final project, a recital, on a Tuesday evening in March, 2002. In the program it states that there is a moral in this piece. Here's the moral. You need to help me once I get this thing started. (Beat!)

"Don't Ever,.....Ever,.....Ever,..... Ever GIVE UP."

(Repeat several times. Keep group going and tell the fable.)

You're in a long dark tunnel, you feel it's your duty to get to the end and out of the tunnel, for many reasons you have to do this,

There's a light in the tunnel, is it a train or is it the end of the tunnel? It does not matter.

You take a huge breath, with all your might you focus on the light, then you move toward it.

The one thing that you don't do is?

(audience chant fills in space)

Oh, by the way, the light in the tunnel, it's not a train. It is the end and I am there.

Appendix B

Participants' comments

Tim Aston's Recital
March 26,2002

Tim Aston and I have taught music, Band and Orchestra, together at CS Porter Middle School since the fall of 1992. We travel to some of our 5th grade feeder schools and share concerts, ideas, and duties at the middle school. From time to time we've taken classes or attended seminars and conferences for recertification as music instructors and a few years ago Tim started working on his Master's Degree. I guess I should say restarted since he was very close to the degree several years ago in Bozeman. I, might have given up rather than restart, but he was pretty set on it. I figured he'd achieve his goal eventually and here he is, a Masters in Fine Arts. About two years ago in preparation for finishing the degree, Tim started talking about a project to show what he does as a music educator. He had several ideas and plans but the recital is what finally really clicked and worked for him. I was hoping there would be a way to help out and offered to hand out programs or whatever he needed. It was indeed an honor when he asked if I could accompany the marimba solo. I started practicing but the music was pretty tough so I suggested he find a more accomplished pianist. That of course was not the issue with Tim. I'm his working partner and he wanted me to do it, WOW. So, I practiced harder and he was practicing on all his pieces too. I started to see this whole program starting to fall together; it really was going to work out for him! I was happy to attend the recital with my husband Steve, and very honored to be a part of the whole plan. My favorite part was the hand movements-of three generations; the past, present and probably future students; the "never give up chant"; and the many friends that were at the recital. What a terrific celebration of Tim's career and he never did give up on that Master's Degree!

Congratulations and thank you Tim!

Christine Wallace, marimba solo accompanist, friend and colleague

April 15, 2002

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a colleague, and more importantly a close friend of Tim Aston. I have been a listener and encourager to him over the last few years as he has gone through the process of working towards his Master's Degree. The process has been agonizing at times as his forward progress has hindered by various challenges, including a job relocation which forced a change of schools and program requirements.

I was most happy to be a part of Tim's Master's recital. The recital's creativity reflected Tim's own unique and relationship-centered personality. The computer-accompanied solos reflected Tim's commitment to using technology in his teaching. He asked Chris Wallace to accompany him on his xylophone solo, not because she is the best pianist in the city, but because they are close colleagues who have shared the same schools and car-pooled many hundreds of miles together over the years.

The black-light presentation was accompanied by former students with whom Tim has maintained a close relationship long since their graduation from middle school. The last part of the presentation included his daughter and grand-daughter. Their participation was a natural extension of Tim's close relationship with his family.

The trombone choir is more than just a group of professional trombone players; they do it for the fun of creating music together and do more volunteer than paid performances. Of course, Tim would ask his middle school buddies to play something together and we would happily comply in our support of one another. Finally, I was pleased that Tim choose to include the church worship team he plays with each Sunday, because Tim also also has a relationship with his Creator which is a big part of who he is.

It was also quite moving to have Tim include the audience participation piece about "Don't ever give up." Because, quite frankly, that is how Tim will ultimately obtain his Master's degree. To which I say, "Good job Timmy, I'm really proud of you."

Sincerely,

Cliff Goodman
Band Director - Meadow Hill Middle School

May 1st, 2002
Dr. Randy Bolton
Dept. of Theatre
University of Montana
Missoula Montana 59803

Dear Professor Bolton,

It has come to my attention that Tim Aston is being considered for a Master's Degree in the coming months. I am writing in strong support of this proposal.

As Tim has been enrolled in the University's Summer Creative Pulse program for the past three summers, it came as no surprise to me that Tim wished to do a performance recital as his final project. However, I was amazed that it was Tim's desire to include his colleagues, his students, his friends and family as part of the performance. Master's performance recitals ala Cecil B. DeMille are just not mainstream. Frankly, I was a bit skeptical at the whole idea.

As the school year unfolded and Tim's focus towards this project sharpened, we shared many conversations (over beers) about his intentions and wishes. I began to realize that this effort for a degree was to happen relatively and unusually late in his career. A career that has been already filled with years of successful teaching experiences and performance in the area of fine arts. Tim is already a seasoned veteran at his trade. It suddenly made the thought of combining and sharing this new "Arts Awareness Ideas & Expansion" (Creative Pulse) with the already tightly knit circle of folks that surround Tim's life a very intriguing project.

In the following months, I observed Tim's preparation for this event on a weekly basis. Of course there was the process of getting back one's "Chops" It takes a few months of intense practice to regain lost technique and endurance. Tim successfully brought back his three strengths (Trombone, Xylophone, & Drum Set) to performance level simultaneously. Then there was the aspect of commissioning a piece from a "in-town" composer to be premiered by the All-City Winds. The process of rehearsing, editing, and preparing this special number took several months of work. He would throw hints my way (over beers) concerning the preparation of the non-musical dimensions of this project. However, I was unable to visualize them until the actual concert. Finally, the coordination of all the entries, musical selections, and performers was indeed an incredible effort. Juggling rehearsals and schedules in any performance of this magnitude was indeed a tribute Tim's organizational skills.

The concert! Wow! What variety! Elements of drama, dance, art, and of course, music was effectively displayed. There were sections that were obviously not easy for Tim to share with an audience of family, peers, and students. It took him way out of his comfort zone. Real growth of an individual takes place as years of security are peeled away exposing the true person and artist. I especially enjoyed this aspect.

I was also impressed at the variety of effects used. Computer accompaniments, black lights, and several solo instruments all served to hold everyones attention. The 30 middle school students that I sat with were all a captive audience for the entire 90 minute program. That is indeed unusal.

I came to the recital knowing that the musical selections were of quality and variety that would carry the main thrust of the program. Tim is an intregal part of several quality musical organizations (Trombone Choir & All-City Winds) who have a long track record of excellence. Tim's solo work showed great profiency on several instruments. Having the four band directors perform was definitely a first. It's great for students to see their teachers actually perform.

Tim's life was on display. His music, family, friends, religion, profession, students, and past were all interwoven into a tapestry for all to see and hear. The recital a vehicle in which pieces of his life can be sewn together. The outcome will hopefully open new avenues and approaches for his professional life. I believe the process was much more valuable than the program. It was a pleasure for me to be part of that process and certainly a pleasure to endorse Tim Aston for the confirmation of a Master's Degree. I would be happy to talk personally (over beers) with anyone concerning Tim!

Sincerely,

John Schuberg

Director of Rattlesnake Valley Band 542-4070



A RECITAL REVIEW

Tim Aston's graduate recital in March was truly a showcase of his life's works, loves, and family.

On March 26, Tim was able to bring together almost all of the elements that make him unique. Drawing from a cast of colleagues, friends, technology, former and present students, and most touching, his family, Tim presented a truly unique and special show. Every element in the program was a reflection of a special interest, or experience in his life.

A special treat during the program was the "band buddies" group. For years, we have played with the idea of putting together a little group to make music together. Tim made it happen.

I was impressed with Tim's ability to step "outside of the box", so to speak with the variety in his recital. Usually not one to put himself in the limelight, Tim was the centerpiece. He pulled together with great finesse some unique pieces, including the mini "Stomp" presentation and the incorporation of Smart Music accompaniments. The blacklight piece with his daughter and granddaughter were the highlight of the show.

I was touched by the inclusion of many generations of musicians and the variety presented in the recital. It was an honor to be a part of it!

Congratulations Tim!

Gretchen Murray
Gretchen Murray,
Band director at Washington,
Paxson & Lewis & Clark schools,
Colleague & Friend

April 21, 2002

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Ryan Beck. I am music education student at the University of Montana. As part of my degree requirement I had to observe for an allotted amount of time in a high school and a middle school music classroom. For my middle school experience, I was assigned to observe Mr. Tim Aston at C. S. Porter Middle School.

From the first day forward that I spent in each of his classes, I knew that he had a wonderful relationship with his students. He always taught musical content in a way that could relate with the kids, whether it was capturing their interest with fascination or simply tasteful humor.

My relationship with Mr. Aston was a very comfortable one. He made me feel very welcome to his classroom. He said great opening statements to each class about me on my first day. Between each period, he would talk about the techniques of teaching the middle school-aged students versus the other grade levels. I enjoyed Mr. Aston's open personality. I appreciated Mr. Aston's openness for questions and comments during my observation time. I also appreciate his continued efforts to see me succeed as a future music teacher.

This last semester Mr. Aston asked if I would participate in a recital that was a requirement for his master's degree in music education. Without hesitation I willfully accepted the invitation and appeared for a dress rehearsal with three other great band teachers from the Missoula area. Mr. Aston played the drumset, the three other band directors played clarinet and I played bass. Mr. John Schubert wrote an arrangement of "Cute" for the recital that we were to play which went together with ease during the dress rehearsal. It was very easy to adapt to Mr. Aston's playing style, and the piece was near perfect from the first time that we played it. At the recital, Mr. Cliff Goodman had a lot of very nice things to say about Mr. Aston as a colleague and friend. I found that I had the same thoughts about him from my perspective as well. Our song went very well and I believe that the recital as a whole was well rounded and performed with great musical talent. Mr. Aston is not only a master teacher but also a remarkable performer. I think that he deserves the best music teaching situations in life and great respect from student teachers to come. Future student teachers of his will not only learn the techniques of instructing at the middle school level, but will see a very positive outlook to the field of music education.



Ryan Beck
Future Bachelor of Music Education

SENTINEL HIGH SCHOOL

Tim Dennison, Principal
901 South Avenue West

Scott Whaley, Asst. Principal
Missoula, MT 59801

Tony Gallegos & Pete Hasquet, Deans
Tel: 406/728-2403 Fax: 406/329-5959

April 14, 2002

To: The University of Montana - Creative Pulse Graduate Program

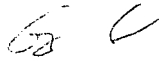
Re: Tim Aston, student

As a public school music instructor in this state for the past twenty years, I've been pleased to be a friend and colleague of Tim Aston. I was fortunate enough to meet him early on, and our relationship has had many opportunities to flourish. During these years of numerous experiences, I've seen a person that is determined, forthright, and an asset to our students.

I was honored to be a part of his graduate recital recently. Our Montana Trombone Choral is very important to us, and we strive to make music our own. Tim has been a sustaining member, and our performance would not be complete without him. He and I shared a duet, which we have done many times in life. I shall not forget the moments.

I know he will continue to have success with his pursuits. He is fine individual with accomplishments, worthy of your bestowing. If I can be of any further help concerning Tim, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Gary Gillett, Director of Bands
Sentinel High School
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215 South Sixth West

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When my son and I first invited a group of trombone players up to our house in December 1989 the reason was not to form a performing group but just to be able to play and enjoy trombone music. It was also a chance for me to visit with other musicians.

Now almost thirteen years and many performances later, the main reason for us trombone players to get together is not preparing for a performance. We come together to enjoy music and camaraderie. As with our first get together, after playing for a couple hours we still look forward to gathering around the dining room table to have a meal of pasta, red sauce with sausage, French bread, red wine, and of course good conversation.

To me The Montana Trombone Chorale is more than a musical group; it is a gathering of friends. And as many also know, that the first gathering in 1989 was also the first time Tomi, who is now my extremely talented trombone playing wife, enter into what a couple of years later would become also her home.

Fred Luefy
Montana Trombone Chorale

The recital was very nicely done. I really liked the fact that each part of it had some personal significance for Mr Aston. It meant alot to me to be a part of it. I think it was a great idea to have two of his former students play the flute duet for the hand motions although it probably would have been easier to simply play a recording of the piece. It was a lot of fun for me to play the duet because I had never had the chance to play a duet with E'Lise before. Overall, the recital was very diverse and very enjoyable.

Kristin Sikkink

Tim Aston is a musician- heart and soul. There isn't a part of him that doesn't live and breathe music. Whether it's the patience in teaching a group of 12 year-old would-be Mozarts, or the passion he exhibits for playing his trombone, one can immediately tell that Mr. Aston's love of the arts runs deep. And since he is responsible for my own love of music, naturally I was thrilled when he began suggesting his ideas for his graduate recital.

Initially I wasn't really sure what to think of the recital. It sounded like fun, but it didn't sound drastically different than any other recital I had attended or performed in. However, as the weeks wore on I gathered a very distinctive picture of the importance of the recital and the honor it was to be asked to participate.

This thing that impressed me the most was Tim's near disinterest in how well myself and my duet partner (who began as Whitney, and a week before the performance became Kristin due to an unfortunate oral surgery) played at his recital. While he hoped we performed well, he honestly wasn't concerned if it didn't go perfectly. For him, it was simply enough that we were there. This was perhaps the most moving aspect of the entire recital. Of all of the previous students Mr. Aston has taught, he was asking that we perform, completely worried that he was pressuring us to play against our will. Even to the day before his recital, he was asking if we were comfortable playing. I don't think I was ever able to quite impress upon him how touching it was that he had even asked me to participate.

The night of the recital came and it went very well, minus the fact that my partner suddenly decided a certain measure just wasn't working for her anymore. Which was alarming at first, but the duet and the other groups all did very well. The interpretation done by Mr. Aston received excellent reviews and I'm certain that it went wonderfully (Due to time constraints, Kristin and I never actually saw it performed.)

The truly amazing part about this graduate recital was that, though it certainly was all about Mr. Aston, judging by his performance one never would have guessed it. He dedicated the entire evening to his mother, and made every effort in the world to show that the focus was all on the people in his life that mattered most to him. He involved the audience in a few of his pieces and more than once was moved to tears by something said about him or a particularly good piece. There were jokes and antics exchanged between the audience and the man of the hour, and there were moments when one wasn't sure if this was indeed a recital for a Master's degree

of just a gathering of friends devoted to the arts. In truth it was both, just the way Mr. Aston had hoped it would be.

The compliment bestowed by merely being asked to contribute to the final product of a really long road for Mr. Aston was a privilege beyond compare. He and his dedication to sticking with and pursuing his dream impress me. There aren't many who would have the drive or the desire to see things through to the end and Mr. Aston should be commended. I am delighted for having had the opportunity to be his student and I hope that I attain even half of his enthusiasm for music and the arts.

Elise Chard

Playing for Mr. Aston's "special" concert was the coolest thing that I've seen. I felt very appreciated to be able to be in it. I honestly have to say that the Winds play Cute better than the Frenchies. (No offense) I am just happy that I could be a part of it and I hope everyone else is too. It was an awesome experience. Thanks.

Peggy Benjamin

Mr. Aston's was probably a mean ~~highlight~~ in All City Winds. I thought this was really something because the concert was so different. My favorite part the "hands" movement with the flutes.

Victor Johnson

Doug Goodman

I liked seeing the band directors play a song because it shows they are friends who do a lot for each other and they really can play like pros. It also showed their love of music.

I liked being in the concert because it is neat to be a select few chosen to be in this recital.

I really enjoyed the recital. I thought the trombone choir was really cool, and was glad I was there to see it. Being a part of the All-City Winds has been an honor, and I will miss it all.

Clara Meinershagen

It has been fun being part of the winds
The concert at the Recital Hall was great
The things that took place during the
performance was fun to watch, and full of
original ideas. I liked the songs you
picked for the xylophone ~~??~~ and the trombone.
When you took out the dark lights, and
did your hand performance, that was something
I had never seen before. I ^{also} liked the trombone
choir, and ~~the~~ ^{cute} songs with Mr. ~~Shit~~ ^{Schnoberg} and
Mr. Goodman, it was a great experience.

Cara McInay

Staci Pedersen

What I thought of Mr. Anton's performance is I thought it was cool. Seeing all my teachers perform that was awesome. And being in all city winds was cool too. It was a good experience for me. Thank you.

I really enjoyed play for the concert. It is very cool listening to people who have been playing for a long time and is - truly inspiring. I think once in a while conductors should show the kids they can play and are willing to play with the kids.

Nicole Holman