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### Contents:

In Memory of member Alex Mac Donald, page 1

Health and Welfare News, page 2

Happy Retirement, page 3

Band Party June 2015, page 3

New CD Release, page 4

Saint John's U.C. Concert, page 4

New Members, page 5

Upcoming Performances, page 6

## In Memory of Alex Mac Donald — a True Bandsman and Friend of the MSB



By Michele McCall

It was with great shock and sadness that we said goodbye to a wonderful member of our band family, Alex Mac Donald. Alex passed away in his 86th year on October 15th at his home in Toronto. As a musician, Alex will always be remembered for his beautiful euphonium playing, and performance as a soloist for the past 20 years. As the leader of his section until just recently, Alex led by example, and many of us aspired to play as melodically and musically as he did each week. As a friend and dedicated member of our band, we will remember Alex for his kindness and great sense of humour. He was proud of his Scottish heritage and always dressed with the tartan for our Christmas concert at the Met. We all know and admired how strong and dedicated he was to his wife Ruth, his love and care for her never wavering, even through very hard times.

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Back in 2011, Alex wrote a short autobiography for a feature in our newsletter. I would like to repeat it here, since it includes information of his involvement in bands in Alex's own words. God bless you Alex, it's people like you that make the MSB such a wonderful family. We will miss you.

The Reverend Doctor Alexander Mac Donald is probably the world's only retired Presbyterian minister to play euphonium in a band attached to a United Church. Alex, like Lloyd Robertson and Justin Bieber, grew up in Stratford, Ontario, and at the age of 12 gave up his career as a violinist to learn baritone in the Stratford Boys' Band. He moved to the euphonium as older members of the band joined the armed forces in World War II, and also joined the band of the Perth Regiment (Reserve) while in his teens. Alex's travels are illustrated by his membership in various bands: The Goderich Blue Water Band, the U of T Blue and White Band, the Loyal Edmonton Regiment Band, the Windsor District Militia Band, the University of Windsor Concert Band, the Newmarket Citizens' Band, the Thornhill Community Band, and the Northdale Concert Band. For a long stretch in the 50's and 60's, Alex did not own an instrument and so was not playing. In the midst of this period of drought he was working in Essequibo County, British Guiana (now Guyana) and was told that the local Essequibo Boys' School (reform), had 24 reconditioned brass instruments which were still in their shipping cases. He volunteered to try to do something about the situation and will never forget the sheer joy of hearing the boys he had taught play "All Through the Night" without too many obvious mistakes. As a member of concert and military bands but a constant lover of the sound of the brass band, Alex was delighted when, in 1995, it became possible for him to come "home" to the Met.

### **Health and Wellness News, with a Bit of History**

By Ken Allen

I have not contributed to the Newsletter in quite some time, so there is a little catching up to do. As you might expect, there are some deaths of past members to report and some played in our junior bands. I have great memories of them all, but I will keep it brief.

Russ Bertram, who started in the 1939 Junior Band and served overseas, died recently at Sunnyside Veterans' Hospital. To my knowledge he was the last one alive from that band. We had three members from the 1945 Junior Band who also passed on. George Chandler, who played horn with us and was at our last reunion, died recently. His obituary was in the paper but gave no cause of death. Max MacDonald's death was no surprise. Max played a fine B flat bass with us for many years before moving to Ottawa where he played in the Maple Leaf Band. He was fighting cancer and that's what took him. Lorne Walton's death was a surprise because I regularly kept in touch by phone. Ironically, he died of a heart attack while talking on the phone. Over his 45 years with us he played cornet, horn and baritone.

Verna Moody, wife of our late Bandmaster Alan Moody, died on Tuesday, Sept. 22. Verna was a

long time friend who I talked with regularly. The last time was three weeks before her death, so the news was quite a shock.

Wally Court of the Earls court Salvation Army Band has researched and is doing a write-up of the Dovercourt Band. This covers mainly the split of the present Metropolitan Band back in 1931 from the Salvation Army. The Dovercourt Corps merged with Earls court 30 years ago but Wally felt the true facts should be recorded for posterity. I'm glad he did because our early members would not talk about it, yet both the Toronto Star and the old Telegram covered it from start to finish. Wally gave me a draft copy of his fine detective work. Because of his work I edited my history book to be 80 Years of Music Making at the Metropolitan Church, 1934–2014. The first printing is almost gone but there are still copies available to purchase. It was interesting to find out the split started at a Good Friday Service in front of a large congregation.

The Dovercourt band was formed in 1904 and Alf Pearce, our first leader joined them at age 15 playing cornet. In 1912 he was Assistant Bandmaster and in 1915 he became Bandmaster at age 24. By my calculation our roots go back 111 years.

### Happy Retirement to our Music Director!

This year we wish a happy retirement to our Music Director, Fran Harvey. She retired on June 30, 2015 from her position as Principal of Dr. J.M. Denison Secondary School after 27 years of teaching, 26 of them with the York Region District School Board. She and Paul have moved to a fabulous country property in Bracebridge from their previous home in rural Kettleby. In addition to conducting the Met Band and guest conducting various other ensembles such as the Oshawa Civic Band and the Encore Symphonic Band, she is currently playing trumpet in the Muskoka Concert Band and the Encore Symphonic Band, solo cornet with the Orillia Silver Band and various other gigs on trumpet, cornet, euphonium and electric bass. Congratulations Fran and enjoy your retirement!

### Band Party June 20 2015

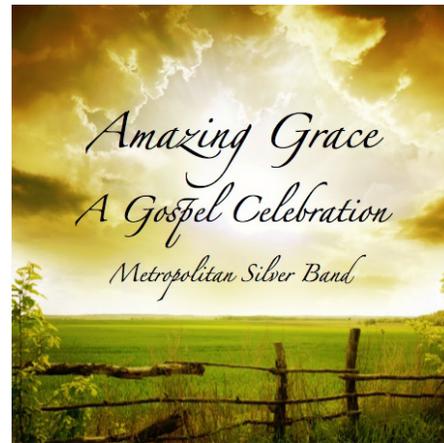
On June 20th, Howard and Lynda hosted a wonderful BBQ party that carried on the band's tacky gift Christmas tradition. First prize for best tacky gift goes to Brian Moyer — yes, those are deer hooves!



## New CD Release, *Amazing Grace — A Gospel Celebration*

In November, the band will release a new CD of gospel music. The CD is in honor of the band's 80th year at the Metropolitan United Church and the gospel theme comes from our recent tradition of finishing a service with a gospel piece for the postlude. So many people have asked, "Is that number on your CD?" that we decided to make a recording of them. The music on the CD includes:

1. Spiritual Sounds – Alan Fernie
2. A Southern Gospel Suite – Alan Fernie
3. Go Down Moses – Leonard Ballantine
4. A Gospel Celebration – Piet Hamers
5. Shall We Gather – Leonard Ballantine
6. Chariots – William Gordon
7. Amazing Grace – William Gordon
8. My Lord What a Morning – William Gordon



This collection of our most popular gospel renditions is sure to delight!

To order a CD, send a cheque made out to the Metropolitan Silver Band, for \$20.00 (or two for \$30.00), to Michele McCall at 1527 Robillard Rd., Mississauga, ON, L5J 3K3.

## First Concert of the Season: St. John's U.C. in Scarborough

Our concert season started off on October 24th with a wonderful welcome from the congregation of St. John's United Church in Scarborough. This was part of their fall concert series and the church was full with an enthusiastic crowd who enjoyed the show. The band featured quite a bit of new music purchased over the summer including Itaru Sakai's *The Seventh Night of July*, and two pieces arranged by Darrol Barry — *The Greatest War Themes* and *The Mask of Zorro*. Thanks to the organizers of St. John's and we hope to perform for you again soon.



## New Band Members 2015

There have been several new band members over the past year: Sam Caruana — baritone, Bill Davis — baritone, Leah Harwood — horn, Brandon McMackin — cornet, Don Levesque — cornet, and Dawn Finn — cornet. Two new members have provided a short bio by way of introduction.

### Band Member Profile — Don Levesque

Don Levesque joined the Metropolitan Silver Band as a cornet player in the fall of 2014. He was born in New Brunswick, attended Saint Thomas University and the University of New Brunswick obtaining a master's degree in second language education and school administration. He recently retired from a 32 year career as teacher, school principal and provincial learning specialist with the assessment branch of the New Brunswick Department of Education.

Don has been involved as a music performer (cornet/trumpet) since the 1970s:

Grand-Falls Community Concert and Marching Band (1973-77), Saint-Thomas University Big Band, The Thomists (1977-2013), Devon Middle School Band Program (1988-94), Nic's Dixieland Band (1991-2013), and Etobicoke Community Concert Band (2014-15).

Don currently lives in Etobicoke with his spouse (and 2 cats) working as a consultant in the field of language assessments and enjoys traveling (South America, Europe and Asia).



### Band Member Profile — Leah Harwood

Leah chose trumpet as her instrument in grade five because it only had three keys and looked pretty cool. That turned out to be a great choice because she fell in love with trumpet playing. As a teenager she played in her high school bands as well as the Greater Windsor Concert Band. She studied with Gillian MacKay who was at the University of Windsor at the time. She earned her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Western Ontario in London and studied trumpet with Peter Audet. After managing to last almost two years as a teacher, she is now working as an office administrator and is very happy to be back in the music scene again. In addition to playing horn in the Met band, she plays second trumpet in the North Toronto Community band. Her musical dream job would be to play trumpet in the pit orchestra for musicals.



## Upcoming Performances

### Fall 2015

Sat. Oct. 24th	St. John's UC concert	7:30 pm
Sun. Nov. 1 <sup>st</sup>	Metropolitan United Anniversary Service	10:45 am
Tues. Dec. 1st	World Aids Day concert – Metropolitan United Church	evening
Sun. Dec. 6 <sup>th</sup>	Met Service and Deck The Halls Downtown Carol Sing	10:45 am and 1:30 pm
Sun. Dec. 13th	Northlea U. C. Caroling in the Pines	7:00 pm
Sun. Dec. 20 <sup>th</sup>	Sunnybrook Veteran's Wing Concert	2:00 – 3:00 pm

### Winter 2016

Sun. Jan. 17 <sup>th</sup>	Metropolitan United Service	10:45 am
Sun. early Feb-TBC	Scarborough Civic Centre Concert	2:00 pm
Tues. Feb. 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Jubilee United Church Concert	TBC - evening
Friday March 11 <sup>th</sup>	Holy Week Play – at Metropolitan United Church	7:30 pm
Sun. Mar. 27 <sup>th</sup>	Met Easter Service	10:45 am

### Don't Forget those Charitable Donations!

We are happy to report that the MSB can issue tax receipts for any charitable donations it receives. If you would like to make a donation to the band, please send a cheque or money order, made out to the "Metropolitan Silver Band", to the address shown on the front page of the newsletter.

### Check Out Our New Website !

Thanks to Debbie Silverthorne for creating our new website. It looks fantastic and you can browse though all the info and photos at <http://www.metband.ca/>