



History of Bands

The history of bands at Ball State is almost as long and varied as the university itself. Learn more about the influential men and women who have helped build and shape the band programs from their earliest beginnings to what they are today.

Clockwise, from top left to bottom right: Earl Dunn and Associates, 1968: Summer Outdoor Concert Series, 1984; Concert Band at Fine Arts Building, 1970; Drum Major Jim Craig, 1969



BEGINNINGS: PALMER AND HARGREAVES

While it is not well documented, the first band at Ball State Teachers College was most likely organized in the 1930s under the leadership of Claude E. Palmer. During his tenure as head of the music department from 1926 to 1945, Palmer conducted all the existing musical organizations.

DUNN REORGANIZES BAND PROGRAM

In 1957, Hargreaves selected Iowa native Earl Dunn to become Ball State University's sixth director of bands. Dunn held this position for 12 years, during which time he led the reorganization, growth, and development of the bands in all facets of wind performance.

Dunn established the Ball State University Wind Ensemble in 1959. Known for its musical excellence in the performance of contemporary repertoire, the ensemble recorded a series of educational records for the Studio Publications Recording Company and was featured at the 1968 North Central Divisional Convention of the College Band Directors National Conference.

1930

1940

1950

1960

1970

1980

1990

TODAY

THE POST-WAR YEARS: HAMILTON, FRED, AND UTGAARD

The following year, Hargreaves selected Robert Hamilton from Cincinnati's Walnut Hills High School to head the band program, a position he held from 1946 to 1950. Herbert Fred, a nationally recognized composer/arranger, received the appointment of director of bands later in 1950. Fred's marching bands were one of the first in the country to perform drill patterns. He also established the concept of an all-male marching band, which was rather quickly modified, upon a suggestion from the president's office, to include women. Between 1954 and 1957, the Ball State Band program continued to evolve under the leadership of Merton Utgaard.

By the mid-1960s, the Ball State University Marching Band had grown from 66 to 190 members and had been named by Dunn "The Pride of Mid-America." From 1964 to 1969, "The Pride" received national acclaim and recognition through a series of outstanding performances. In observing the Ball State Band as part of the 1965 U.S. presidential parade, Walter Cronkite said during the telecast, "Now there is a band." The band has performed for three presidents: Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and George H.W. Bush.

In the 1960s, the marching band established a reputation for playing big-band styled arrangements that were written especially for the band by staff arranger and Burris faculty member Richard L. Dunham. During this same period a flag corps was added to the band and the crowd-pleasing, musical production-styled halftime shows were enjoyed by young and old alike. Performances by "The Pride of Mid-America" included the 1965 and 1967 Grantland Rice Bowl games, and televised performances with the Chicago Bears in 1966, 1967, and 1968. A nationally televised performance at the 1967 NFL Western Conference Championship Game (Cowboys vs. Browns) was a milestone in the Ball State band tradition.

Following the departure of Earl Dunn in 1969 for a teaching position at the University of Alabama, Dean Depoy, who had previously served as the director of bands at Wheeling (Illinois) High School, was selected to direct the university bands. DePoy served as director of bands until 1971. In the summer of 1971, Roger McConnell, a former member of the Ball State band program, became the first Ball State alumnus to serve as director of bands. McConnell held this position for 13 years and has remained with the Ball State School of Music as a professor of music.

During the 1970s, "The Pride" grew to a membership of 250 and the Ball State Bands became a unit comprising Varsity, Variety, Symphony, and Concert bands, and the Wind Ensemble.

SCAGNOLI RETURNS TO BALL STATE

In 1984, Joseph Scagnoli returned to his alma mater as director of bands, after having established successful programs at Selma (Indiana) High School, Union-Endicott High School in New York, and Western Carolina University in North Carolina. Under Scagnoli's energetic direction, the Ball State marching band became the first university band in Indiana to use contemporary curvilinear forms to emphasize and portray the band's music on the field. By 1988, the band had grown to 285 members. Similar to Dunn's efforts in the 1960s, Scagnoli reorganized the Ball State Bands to include the Marching Band, Wind Ensemble, Symphony Band, Concert Band, Basketball Pep Band, and Ceremonial Band.

During the 22 years that Scagnoli conducted the Wind Ensemble, the band appeared at numerous national and regional conventions. In 1994, the Wind Ensemble was selected to perform for the North Central Divisional Convention of the Music Educators National Association Conference in Minneapolis and was the featured performing ensemble for the opening session of the 1996 Indiana Music Educators State Convention in Indianapolis. They also performed at the 2000 Indiana Music Educators Association Convention as a featured Collegiate Ensemble. The band program was involved in numerous commissions by nationally recognized composers during Scagnoli's tenure.

Under the direction of Scagnoli, "The Pride of Mid-America" traveled to Fresno, California, in 1989 to perform in the California Raisin Bowl, and to Las Vegas in 1993 and 1995 to perform in the Las Vegas Bowl. Additional performances by the marching band during this period included six NFL games for the Buffalo Bills, Cincinnati Bengals, and the Indianapolis Colts.

THE BALL STATE BANDS TODAY

2006 marked the onset of significant changes in the Ball State band program with two new directors hired to lead the program. Thomas Caneva was appointed director of bands and director of "The Pride of Mid-America" Marching Band. Following a national search, Kalantarian was retained as the assistant director of bands in 2007. Caneva came to Ball State from the University of Illinois; Kalantarian had previously served on the faculty of Wake Forest University.

One notable change occurred in the fall of 2007 when the concert ensembles were restructured to include a fall semester offering for nonmajors (Campus Band) and the Symphony Band became an ensemble that met for the entirety of the academic year. These changes resulted in the same ensemble offerings seen today.

The Ball State University Wind Band Conducting Workshop debuted in the spring of 2007. Recent workshop clinicians have included Gary Green, Paul Dooley, Mallory Thompson, Scott McAllister, Richard Clary, Craig Kirchhoff, Steven Bryant, Steven Davis, Eugene Migliaro Corporon, John Mackey, Thomas Lee, Angela Woo, Allan McMurray, and Joe Missal. The workshop has attracted both aspiring and experienced conductors from throughout the United States.

The Wind Ensemble has had numerous regional and national performances during this period of time. In 2008, the band was the featured ensemble at the Chicagoland Concert Band Festival. Additional appearances included the North Central Division Convention of the Music Educators National Conference in Indianapolis in 2009, the College Band Directors National Association (CBDNA) North Central Division Conference at Illinois State University in Normal in 2010 and the Indiana Music Educators Association State Convention in 2011.

The first performance by the Ball State Wind Ensemble at a national conference was at the CBDNA National Conference at the University of Washington in Seattle in 2011. The Wind Ensemble performed at 78th annual Convention of the American Bandmasters Association in Indianapolis in 2012 (Ball State served as cohosts of this convention along with Butler University, Indiana University, and Purdue University) and at the 2014 CBDNA North Central Division Conference, which was hosted by Ball State.

During Dan Kalantarian's tenure as assistant director of bands, "The Pride of Mid-America" Marching Band appeared at the 2008 International Bowl in Toronto and the 2009 GMAC Bowl in Huntsville, Alabama. Additionally, the band appeared at road games at the University of Michigan, Indiana University, Miami (Ohio) University and Northern Illinois University. The band also performed at halftime for two Indianapolis Colts games.

Kalantarian served as the director of the marching band for four years, resigning in 2010.

In 2010, Shawn Vondran was appointed to the position of assistant director of bands and director of "The Pride of Mid-America" Marching Band. Vondran previously served as the associate director of bands at Western Illinois University. During Vondran's tenure as director of "The Pride," the band performed at away games at Central Michigan University and Western Michigan University. In addition to the road game performances, the band performed for the Indianapolis Colts during the 2011 season and at Cedar Point (Ohio) in 2012. Members of the band were also featured live on *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon* following Super Bowl XLVI.

As conductor of the Symphony Band, Vondran led the band in performances at the 2012 and 2014 Indiana Music Educator's professional development conferences in Fort Wayne, Indiana. These performances marked the first time the Symphony Band was invited to play at a convention. The band also appeared as the performing ensemble for a "Hidden Gems" session at the 2014 CBDNA North Central Division Conference. In 2014, Vondran resigned as assistant director of bands after four years of service to Ball State University.

In 2014, Thomas Keck was appointed interim associate director of bands and director of "The Pride of Mid-America" Marching Band. Keck had previously been a faculty member at the University of Miami Frost School of Music.

In recent years, substantial events have marked the further growth and development of the band program. The Ball State University High School Honor Band was rejuvenated in the fall of 2011 with one honor band and has grown to three bands as of 2015. The festival has flourished under the direction of guest conductors Eric Wilson, Andrew Boysen, Michael King, Paula Crider, Doug Henderson, Dan Tembras, Thomas Lee, Kevin Collins, Gary Sousa, Scott Jones, Steven Peterson, and Rodney Dorsey.

Caroline Hand joined the Ball State School of Music in 2015 as associate director of bands and director of "The Pride of Mid-America" Marching Band. Hand had previously served as a graduate assistant at the University of Minnesota and held teaching positions in Texas and Arkansas.

The Ball State Wind Ensemble made appearances in the 2017 Indiana Music Educators Association Conference in Fort Wayne and College Band Directors National Association Conference in Kansas City, Missouri.

CHRONOLOGY OF BALL STATE BAND DIRECTORS

Dr. Claude E. Palmer	1926–1945	Band Director
Dr. Robert Hargreaves	1945–1946	Director of Bands
Mr. Robert Hamilton	1946–1950	Director of Bands
Mr. Herbert Fred	1950–1954	Director of Bands
Dr. Merton Utgaard	1954–1957	Director of Bands
Mr. F. Earl Dunn	1957–1969	Director of Bands
Mr. Dean DePoy	1969–1971	Director of Bands
Mr. T. Roger McConnell	1971–1984	Director of Bands
Dr. Joseph Scagnoli	1984–2006	Director of Bands
Mr. Christian Zembower	1984–1999	Director of "The Pride"
	1998–2006	Assistant Director of Bands
	1999–2006	Director of "The Pride"
Dr. Thomas Caneva	2006–	Director of Bands
Mr. Dan Kalantarian	2006–2010	Associate Director of Bands, Director of "The Pride"
Dr. Shawn Vondran	2010–2014	Associate Director of Bands, Director of "The Pride"
Dr. Thomas Keck	2014	Interim Associate Director of Bands, Director of "The Pride"
Dr. Caroline Hand	2015–	Associate Director of Bands, Director of "The Pride"

