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## Message From the President

*Glenn D. Price*

### Elite or Elitist?

As WASBE has defined its role in the profession and the world, there has been much necessary discussion over the most effective ways in which WASBE can lead. At times there have been perceptions that WASBE was "elitist", or like a club that served only the interests of the few. Others have countered this notion, stating that only by being an elite organization, can WASBE be effective.

Ultimately, for me this terminology comes down mostly to semantics, but it does raise an important issue. The term "elitist" implies excluding, rather than including. The term "elite" has sufficient nuance that it could be used by individuals on either side of the debate. However, for WASBE, I feel that it is a useful concept for us in defining our leadership role.



*Glenn Price*

There are a couple of current popular phrases, which capture aspects of this discussion. The "big tent" is an appropriate image of WASBE as an inclusive organization. In our case it is not just about accepting diversity, but encouraging it. Another phrase, being "a mile wide but an inch deep" sounds the note of caution that we must heed, if the quality of our work is to have substance and depth.

Indeed, there is no way to effectively be "all things to all people", to quote an expression that represents yet another cautionary tale. So, how then to reconcile this apparent dilemma? How can we embrace all in our art form, without being merely superficial or shallow?

There is a way to succeed in this challenge, which is to represent our common interest of wind organizations around the world, by leading with a set of ideals and principles. These principles are guided by one central theme - "Artistry". Our artistry leads us to insist upon high standards; in repertoire, musicianship, expression and technical precision, which one might posit, are necessary preconditions to an artistic performance. James Galway, in an interview about his own development, remarked on the positive influence of his teacher, who insisted upon a perfect technique. He stated that without the technical elements in place, there would be "nothing to express".

These elements are not the exclusive domain of professional or conservatory ensembles. While the specific criteria for success are different for a young musician than they might be for a professional, the elements that we cultivate are universal. Tone quality, intonation and technique are important regardless of the level of the musicians involved.

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# A New Professional Wind Ensemble in Iraq

Dr. Gene Aitken

This past year I have been to Northern Iraq for three months through a program called American Voices. It is the only US non-profit organization in the Middle East, and other parts of the world, that works with local performing arts organizations including orchestra, dance, musical theatre, jazz, children's theatre, ballet, and other local arts groups. It is a unique organization in a world that promotes people of all cultures working together. And, they are very successful when one considers in Iraq it means getting the Shiite, Sunnis, Kurds, and Christians working together. A major accomplishment!

When John Ferguson, CEO of American Voices, and I went to Iraq in March and April 2008, we split our time between two major cities in Kurdistan; Erbil, the capitol of Kurdistan, and Sulaimaniyah, an arts community closer to the Iranian border. John worked with piano and chamber ensembles, while I worked with the jazz and fusion ensembles, and the City of Sulaimaniyah's new wind ensemble. The wind ensemble had only a few rehearsals prior to our arrival.

We had known the conductor of the new wind ensemble from our previous trips to Iraq. Najat Amin, who was appointed Music Directorate of Sulaimaniyah by the Iraq Minister of Culture, is a very talented composer and conductor. After daily rehearsals of a minimum of three hours, plus sectionals for 10 days, we were able to prepare the ensemble for its first concert.

The concert on 2 April 2008 had a standing room only audience. This is hard to imagine as the publicity for the concert was only released the morning of the concert, for obvious security reasons. Word of mouth, television, and the desire to hear live music, did the rest.

At the conclusion of the concert, an executive of a well-known corporation addressed Mr. Najat and said he would like to fund the wind ensemble project, so all the musicians in the wind ensemble could focus on their music and be employed full time. And full time in Iraq meant it would be sufficient money to live on.

On our next trip to Iraq three months later, during the month of July 2008, the City of Sulaimaniyah Wind Ensemble was still rehearsing three hours a day, three days

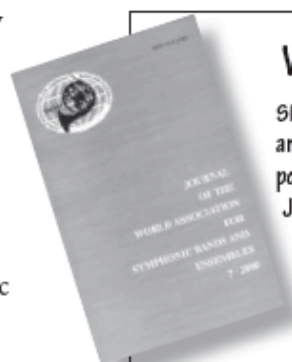
a week, and still funded by the corporation. The improvement in the ensemble was very noticeable. With the support of the Alfred/Belwin Music Corporation, we were able to take a quantity of new wind ensemble and chamber music to Kurdistan and enlarge their exposure to Western wind literature. In addition, musical instruments, mouth-



*The City of Sulaimaniyah Wind Ensemble with Dr. Aitken conducting*

pieces, and method books from John Mills Music, Jamey Aebersold, and others really made a significant difference.

If you can imagine a country without written music, recordings, method books, and the basics we take for granted, then that is Iraq. There is a desire on the part of the Iraqi and Kurdistan people to learn beyond what we can imagine. They are a wonderful, talented, and caring people. They need our support!



## WASBE Journals

Single back issues of WASBE Journals are available for US\$ 15.00 + US\$ 3.00 postage. A complete set of 13 WASBE Journals is US\$ 175.00 + US\$ 6.00 postage. To order contact:

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