

Middle School band to play original composition

By Teri Davis
Contributing Writer

Northmont's Middle School Wind Ensemble will perform an original composition entitled "Alarm" in concert on Thursday, March 22 at 7:30 p.m. in the Middle School gymnasium.

Written by University of Dayton freshman music education major Ryan Betts, a 2011 Vandalia-Butler graduate, the piece makes use of indeterminism, an experimental type of music that allows the individual musician to make many choices about what and how to play within a structured framework.

Rather than having a tradi-



Ryan Betts

tional sheet of music to play, the musicians have instructions such as "play louder than your neighbor," "play your favorite note," "play as fast as you can"

or "sing the note you just played on the first syllable of your name."

Middle School Band Director Julie Swank says that this style of music is fun for the kids. "When they're told they're allowed to play outside the box, it's really fun, like being a rebel."

Eighth grade Wind Ensemble member Jacky Maggard agrees, "It's our favorite piece to play. We have a blast playing it."

Swank was acquainted with Betts because he had been one of her French horn private lessons students. She was able to hear another of his original compositions, "Jubilation,"

premiered by the Dayton Philharmonic Concert Band last year.

"It was spirited in a positive way, happy and melodic," she said. She then offered him the opportunity to showcase other compositions with her band.

Swank says she likes to work with young, local composers because they are able to come to her classroom and work directly with the kids, giving the kids insight into what the composer wants during a particular portion of the music. Betts has worked with the Wind Ensemble twice.

Maggard said that Betts' instruction helped the band "make it better. It was nice

hearing what he wanted it to sound like."

Swank thinks it helps the kids to also understand that music composition is still being done; that music composition didn't die with Beethoven and Mozart.

Betts says his goal musically is "learning to write for everything," but he intends to focus on concert band, marching band and some orchestral music. He indicated that he might consider using aspects of indeterminism in future compositions.

Betts will be present at the concert on March 22, and the community is invited to attend this free performance.

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