

Arts & Entertainment

Westfield Community Band to Present 'An Evening at the Opera' Tonight

WESTFIELD — The Westfield Community Band, under the direction of Dr. Thomas Connors, continues its 102nd Summer Concert Series with a program of the most famous operas of the 1800s and 1900s, entitled "An Evening at the Opera" on Thursday, July 10, at 7:30 p.m. in Mindowaskin Park.

"While some concertgoers may not recognize the titles of all of the program selections, everyone will certainly recognize the music itself," stated Dr. Connors. "For many years, opera produced music which became the popular 'hits' of the day and these compositions became widely familiar through film, television and advertising."

The concert will feature trumpet soloist Charles Bumcrot performing perhaps the most well-known of all arias, "Nessun Dorma," from Giacomo Puccini's last opera "Turandot." Mr. Bumcrot, a Millburn resident, is principal trumpet with the New Haven, Connecticut based Orchestra New England and a faculty member and concert artist at the Kean Conservatory of Music and a visiting specialist in trumpet at Montclair State University.

Highlighting the band's music program will be performances of "Light Calvary Overture" by Franz von Suppe, "The Barber of Seville Overture" by Gioachino Rossini and "Porgy and Bess" by George Gershwin. "Light Calvary" became world famous as the theme of the "Lone Ranger" television series in the 1950s. Themes from the "Barber of Seville" can be heard in many cartoons and films. *Porgy and Bess* is perhaps the most famous of all American operas, containing numerous well known songs, including "Summertime."

The remainder of the themed program will include operatic favorites "Triumphal March from Aida" by Verdi, "Die Fledermaus" by Johann Strauss II, and "Carman" by Georges Bizet. The band continues its Summer Concert Series with its final concert on Thursday, July 17, entitled "Summer Pops."

The band rehearses each Wednesday evening from 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. in the Community Room in the Westfield Municipal Building, 425 East Broad Street. The band's membership includes musicians from age 16 to age 86, including many active and retired music educators. Under the music direction of Dr. Thomas Connors, director of Instrumental Music Studies and an assistant professor of music education at Kean University, the band performs a wide variety of concert band literature, including many contemporary compositions.

Experienced area musicians who are interested in a position with the band should contact band President Barry Rosenberg at (908) 337-9073 or info@westfieldcommunityband.com.

The band's Summer Concert Series is sponsored by the Westfield Recreation Department, Bruce Kaufman, Director. Chairs and blankets are recommended. In the event of rain, the concert will take place in the Westfield Community Room, located in the Westfield Municipal Building.



Paul Lachenauer for The Westfield Leader and The Times
COMMUNITY CONCERT...The Westfield Community Band will present "An Evening at the Opera" tonight, Thursday, July 10, in Mindowaskin Park in Westfield at 7:30 p.m. The band continues its annual Summer Concert Series on Thursday, July 17.

App Offers Access To Books From TV, Radio

SCOTCH PLAINS — The Scotch Plains Public Library has added a feature to its mobile app that makes it easy to find books that are mentioned on television or radio shows, even if a person cannot remember the title or author. CoverCake includes television shows such as "The Today Show," "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart" and "The Colbert Report," and radio shows such as "The Diane Rehm Show" and "NPR: All Things Considered." CoverCake also contains current *New York Times* Bestseller Lists in fiction and non-fiction.

The library's mobile app, provided by Boopsie, also allows patrons to search the catalog, check their accounts, download e-books or audiobooks, find upcoming events and use databases. More information about the mobile app can be found at scotlib.boopsie.com or by contacting the Reference Desk at (908) 322-5007, extension no. 204, or library@scotlib.org. The Scotch Plains Public Library is located at 1927 Bartle Avenue, one block from Park Avenue, in the center of the township.

Free Time In Chicago: Play Ball! Enjoying a Game at Wrigley Field

By FRED T. ROSSI
Specially Written for the Summer Travel Series

On the last day of a business trip to Chicago, I decided to skip the final afternoon of meetings before my early evening flight home and, instead, have a look at one of America's great shrines: Wrigley Field, home of the perennially hapless Chicago Cubs (who are even more perennially hapless than my Mets) and one of the country's very few remaining old-time baseball venues (Fenway Park in Boston being the other along with some ancient minor league stadiums).

I was staying at a grand old hotel in the Loop, a few blocks from what was then called the Sears Tower and a short walk to Michigan Avenue and the Magnificent Mile, and a few blocks beyond that, Lake Shore Drive and the vastness of Lake Michigan.

I had very little time to explore the Windy City during my four-day stay. So, on that final day, feeling I had missed out on many of the sights and sounds of Chicago, I consulted a very not-to-scale tourist map at my hotel and found that Wrigley Field was about two thumb lengths away from the downtown area. All I wanted to do was see Wrigley. After viewing it on television for so many years, I just wanted to see what it looked like from the outside, to stand on Waveland Avenue beyond the left field fence where so many home run balls have landed during Wrigley's 100 years in existence.

First I had to get there. And two thumbs' length on the tourist map didn't seem like such a great distance so I decided, on this perfect late September morning, to forgo Chicago's famed elevated subway — the "El" — and, instead, walk from the Loop up to Wrigley. I saw that the El ran directly there so I pretty much followed the train tracks northward.

Word to the wise: Tourist maps may be a fun way to see what sights there are to see but beyond that, they are not reliable. Sort of like the outdated tourist maps pointing you to the homes of long-gone stars like Gene Autry and Lucille Ball that hawkers still sell in Beverly Hills.

I set out from my hotel around 11 a.m., figuring I could get to Wrigley Field before noon, take an hour to soak in its history and the neighborhood and then jump on the El back downtown for a late lunch and then a trip to the airport.

My trek took me through every variety of neighborhoods — good, bad and otherwise: quiet and leafy streets of row houses similar to Park Slope in Brooklyn, low-budget blocks full of galleries and inexpensive apartments, somewhat seedy areas of abandoned buildings and general decay. After walking for well over an hour, I began to wonder, where the heck is Wrigley Field? I cursed that tourist map when I finally stopped a shopkeeper and asked him how much farther it was to Wrigley. He chuckled and shook his head as he waved his hand off into the distance. "You're walking?" he asked, with some disbelief. "You got a long way to go." Thankfully, he didn't ask me how far I had already traveled.

I soldiered on, but began to wonder whether I should abort the mission and find a train station to either ride the rest of the way to Wrigley or just return to the hotel.

Then, about 90 minutes into my excursion, I spotted it. First I saw the pennants, each one marking the city where major league baseball had a team, flying from its roof as I walked up Sheffield Avenue. Then I saw its light green exterior as I got closer. And then, rising high above everything, that great scoreboard in center field with the scores marked not by lighted numbers but by large metal numbers that were changed by hand — the way it had been done since the place opened in 1914.

I saw the crowds and the activity and it was obvious there was a game that afternoon. And it was immediately obvious to me that I had only one option. "You gotta go in," I told myself. I had walked all the way up there — I later calculated it to be a six-plus mile trip — so I had to experience Wrigley Field in its entirety.

Susan Sarandon's character in the *Bull Durham* movie said she believed in the "church of baseball." And if the national pastime is a religion, then entering Wrigley Field was, for me, walking into its cathedral. I bought a cheap seat in the center field bleachers, under the big green scoreboard. The first-place Cubs were playing the Phillies, but pre-game warm-ups were still going on when I found my seat in the front row.

Earlier that season, the Mets had traded one of their relief pitchers, the fun-loving Roger McDowell, to the Phillies. And there he was, just

below me in left field, alternately warming up and playing with a garden hose used to wet down the outfield dirt. The Mets had stagnated since the trade so I yelled down to McDowell, pleading with him to come back to the Mets. He laughed, uttered something along the lines of "Hell, no!" and then turned the hose on us fans sitting under an increasingly hot sun.

Wrigley Field barely seats 40,000 — not counting the hundreds who sit on the balconies and rooftops of neighborhood row houses and restaurants and have almost as good a view as paying spectators. Back in the old days, those views were pretty much free, subject only to the luck of renting the right apartment. Entrepreneurs eventually figured those rooftops were cash cows and began charging people top dollar to sit up there.

I had my \$10 bleacher seat, up front, where I could touch the beautiful ivy that covers the outfield walls. The game itself was of little consequence to me. Wrigley Field feels like an oversized Little League stadium. No matter where your seats are, you feel you are close to the action. And despite the recently-installed light towers — night baseball at Wrigley did not take place until 1988 — baseball on this day was being played the way it should be played, during the day. The grass looked a little deeper green and the foul lines and the Cubs' home uniforms were even more brightly white under the afternoon sun.

I stayed until the seventh inning stretch, just so I could see Harry Caray, the beloved Cubs broadcaster, lean out of the television booth and lead the crowd in the singing of "Take Me Out To The Ballgame," as he did during every home game. And on my way out, I stood for a while with a few dozen people on the street beyond the left field fence, waiting for a home run ball to clear the fence and the bleachers and land in some lucky fan's glove.

I'll never know if I missed some earth-shattering revelation at the meetings I skipped that afternoon, but my endless walk up to the Friendly Confines of Wrigley Field was something I would easily do again. And so should you, if you have a few free hours in Chicago. No wonder Ferris Bueller made sure to stop there on his day off. Business and school can wait. Baseball at a shrine can't.

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