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Patriotism the key for PCHS Marching Band

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By Nathan Mayberg

The Port Chester High School Marching Band has had a tall order this year. Not only is their performance being described as one of their toughest by their longtime director, Robert Vitti, but they have had to learn the show over the course of perhaps the hottest two late August weeks on record.

Spending each morning and afternoon practicing at Crawford Park during the hottest summer in history has been a true test of the band's resolve.

"You have to be dedicated," observed Maria Molano, a senior clarinet player.

The trying conditions of "band camp" have not dampened the group's enthusiasm for their patriotic piece entitled "Heroes Fallen, not Forgotten."

Clearly, the band members have been moved by the mood and feelings of the show, which are a tribute to those who have paid the ultimate price during times of war and attack on the U.S.

Vitti said the band has been "working extremely hard under these conditions."

Vitti said the show's patriotic theme is a tribute to America's fallen heroes of all of America's wars and battles.

There are several screens which will be held up by band members featuring such important historical figures and events as Abraham Lincoln, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, World War II and the Civil War.

The impressive artwork was designed by former band parent Sharla Kaufman.

Vitti, who has been directing the band for more than 30 years, said the performance will be "one of our toughest shows." There are three different movements which consist of a collage of different patriotic arrangements.

Band President Matt Gurdak, a senior, said this year's performance is "probably my favorite so far." He thinks the music will "get people's emotions going."

One of the climaxes is during the playing of "Amazing Grace," he said. He said the artistic screens do a good job of portraying some historical moments in U.S. history "that make the country great."

In addition, he said, "no matter what this country has been



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through, it always comes back—no matter what.” He believes part of the reason is the different nationalities who come to the U.S. from all over the world to contribute to society.

“It should be a very interesting sight to see,” said alto saxophone player Emily LaGuardia of this year’s performance.

“It is very patriotic,” said sophomore Caitlyn Celestino, a flutist.

Erin Dooley, a senior drum major who helps lead the band, said she was excited about the new show. “I think we are going to do really well,” she said. “It is one of our best shows...everybody is into it.”

Grace Bunnell, a senior marimba player, said “I love the show this year. It is something to get excited about. It has really good music.”

Bunnell said the familiar patriotic songs should “really connect to people.”

Felipe Giraldo, a senior marimba player, said the show helps tell the nation’s fascinating history.

Sarah Dapaah, who plays the tenor saxophone, called the show inspirational. “I like the patriotic theme.”

“We have a lot of work ahead of us,” concluded Vitti. “It is going to be good once we get it down.”

Fittingly, the band will have its first competition on Saturday, Sept. 11 in Danbury.

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