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## Making Music Another Way for Alumnus to Educate

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## Making Music Another Way for Alumnus to Educate

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – With the number of orchestras and wind symphonies in Dallas, Texas, it was no surprise that 2009 Illinois Wesleyan graduate Preston Prior was drawn there with his music education degree. What might surprise some, however, was his decision to found his own ensemble.



*Preston Prior*

“The Dallas-Fort Worth area is a wealth of musical outlets,” said Prior, who works as head band director and music department chair for Bishop Dunne Catholic School in Dallas. “Every suburb has its own symphony and the area has more community bands per capita than anywhere else in the world.” Along with teaching, Prior is part of such ensembles as The Dallas New Life Symphony Orchestra, the Carrollton Wind Symphony and the Metropolitan Winds.

“Music for me is both a vocation and an avocation,” Prior said. “It’s important as an educator to continue to perform. Music educators are scholars and artists, and it benefits students to be able to bring an artist’s work and musicianship into the performance-based classroom.”

With that belief in the educational power of music, Prior created the Dallas Civic Wind Ensemble (DCWE) last fall. Although they only began playing in September of 2010, the ensemble has already garnered attention. Next season, they are anticipating performing in the grand Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center in Dallas, and this summer they have been invited to be a featured ensemble performance at the Texas Bandmasters Association Conference in San Antonio. “That’s quite an honor for a band that has only been in existence for six months,” said Prior.

The members of the 50-piece ensemble were hand-picked by Prior, many of whom play with him in area symphonies. “I had an idea to create what you might call an ‘all-star’ wind symphony — inviting the best players from various ensembles to join the DCWE,” he said. “We have players from all over the area, from both the Dallas and Fort Worth symphony orchestras, the President’s Own Marine Band, a former member of Manhattan Transfer and many other professional, degreed musicians,” he said.

Prior serves as the ensemble’s associate director. To take the helm of the ensemble, however, Prior asked Douglas Stotter, the director of bands at the University of Texas at Arlington. Stotter, who accepted and became the ensemble’s artistic director, has a few ties to Illinois Wesleyan of his own. “Dr. Stotter went to the University of Michigan with Professors Steven Eggleston and Roger Garrett, who conduct the IWU Civic Orchestra and Wind Ensemble, and Symphonic Winds respectively,” said Prior. “In fact, it was in Professor Eggleston’s conducting class that I used a textbook written by Dr. Stotter.”

The mission of the Dallas Civic Wind Ensemble’s is as a multi-faceted one, Prior noted — to educate as they entertain, as well as provide an artistic outlet to talented musicians of the Dallas-Fort Worth area. “We perform a variety of the finest music composed for winds and percussion, from the cornerstones of the repertoire to more contemporary works. Our goals are to reach across the range of musical experience, to commission new pieces, work with and engage various artists and composers and explore new ways to bring music to audiences,” he said.

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