

McMaster Marching Band Budget Questions

1. What instruments do you plan on retiring this year? What instruments are you purchasing this year? What is the outlook on these items in the next year?

The Marching Band is always looking at expanding our instrument inventory. This year, we have added three flutes, four clarinets, two alto saxophones, one tenor saxophone, one bass clarinet, one bass trombone, and two sousaphones. We are not planning on retiring any instruments this year; the Band is around twelve years old, and most of our instruments are much younger than that, so with routine care and, whenever needed, maintenance, cleaning, and repair, we are able to have minimal turnover in our inventory.

Our goal with the inventory is to have a diverse portfolio of instruments to accommodate anyone who wishes to join. As the mandate of the Marching Band is to provide an inclusive space for anyone looking to learn an instrument, we want to never be limited by the instruments in our inventory.

Looking forward to future instrument purchases, the next area of expansion is our drumline. That is, the snare drums, bass drums, quint toms drums, and cymbals. With our pre-covid membership numbers, we were nearly at capacity on both the snares and toms, so we would like to be able to expand these sections. These purchases likely will not be made this year, but sometime either next year or the year after.

2. In the Buffalo St. Patrick's Day parade, please provide more insights into how revenues are generated. The Toronto event is projected to make a profit; however, the Buffalo event is projected to be a loss.

There are a lot of factors that we consider when deciding on what events to attend or which event we should attend over other options. For instance, during a normal (non-pandemic) year, we usually attend between 5-7 Santa Claus Parades, but are choosing those parades from a list of 45. One of these factors is indeed the revenue, and in turn, profit, we are able to generate from a given event. However, there are often events that we do run at a loss. As a not-for-profit organization, we are not striving to maximize profits but instead, we strive to give our members the best experiences and exposure to performances as possible.

When we are looking at the St. Patrick's Day parades in particular, yes, the Toronto parade generates more revenue. But the Buffalo parade is a better experience for our members. In general, the American audience is far more receptive and enthusiastic

towards marching bands as they are a greater part of American culture. This can be seen not only in the Buffalo St. Patrick's Day parade, but also throughout American college football, where marching bands are a staple of every halftime show. This difference in culture, and by extension, experience for our members, is crucial so that our members are exposed to the different aspects of marching band culture, and – an aspect of music that is not often talked about – what difference the audience makes to a performance.

3. In regard to the uniform and windbreaker purchases, how many are being annually for the 80 members?

In the long run, the Band hopes to not have annual uniform costs. That being said, our uniforms and windbreakers are not one-size-fits-all. If we return to pre-covid membership numbers and had 80 members and exactly 80 uniforms, we almost definitely would not be able to provide a uniform to every member due to the varying sizes of both our members and the uniforms.

To provide a welcoming and accommodating space for every member, it is our duty to have an inventory of uniforms that can accommodate any person, and more than that, we must accommodate up to 80 people, no matter their sizes in aggregate. Our purchases in recent years have specifically targeted the extremal sizes, both on the extra large and the extra small ends of the scale.

Yet as the band grows, the smallest and largest members get even smaller and larger, respectively, due to the law of large numbers. The current state of uniforms and windbreakers is something that gets reviewed every year as we reflect on the new members in the Band, and whether we believe we will be able to accommodate everyone in the following year. That being said, as our uniform and windbreaker portfolios are both diverse and deep, we believe that we are now in a good position to not be in a position where we need to make additional uniform or windbreaker purchases for the next couple years.

4. What are the managerial and rehearsal costs entailing for the Fall 2021 term, as most events have been virtual up to this point?

The managerial and rehearsal costs have been minimal thus far. Due to low attendance last year, we have put Masterclasses on hold until we return to in person rehearsals, so the only managerial, rehearsal, and instructional costs have been for the Music & Education Director. Although they have not been paid yet, they will receive a set rate of

\$600 for the summer/fall term and an additional \$1440 for four 3 hour rehearsals, totalling from \$600-\$2040 for their work this semester. The variance in expected cost is due to the fact that we are unsure as to whether we are able to run rehearsals this semester; we are still waiting on our PPE order of bell covers and instrument masks to arrive.¹ The Music & Education Director's duties this semester have been:

- 1) Planning rehearsals for when we are again in-person. This includes selecting our music repertoire.
- 2) Communicating with event organizers, largely letting them know that we were not/are not operational for the Fall 2021 semester, but that we would hopefully be available for bookings in Winter 2022.
- 3) Aiding in the logistical organization of the marching band's equipment, providing suggestions from their years of experience working with bands.

In the event that we are able to run rehearsals throughout this semester, we would also have instructor costs associated with each of those, approximately \$480 per rehearsal.

As a point of reference, the Western Mustang Band, Western University's nearest equivalent to the McMaster Marching Band, has Quinn Flemming on their staff, who commands an annual salary around the order of \$20'000. This amount is far greater than that of our maximum annual cost of \$6'000 for our Music and Education Director.

5. What are the Masterclasses entailing? Are these classes a component that was implemented through the virtual nature of the Fall 2021 term?

The Masterclasses were implemented in 2020-21 as a rehearsal replacement for the time that we could not be in person. One can think of the term “Masterclass” as a marketing term for what they were: sectionals, where we held one Masterclass (sectional) for each section of the band. We hired separate instructors for each of the sections: brass, woodwinds, percussion, and colour guard. These instructors are experts in their fields. One such instructor is Carina Lam, who holds a Master’s degree in Euphonium Performance and studied under Steven Mead, one of the world’s foremost euphonium soloists.

¹ Instrument masks and bell covers have been heavily supply-constrained since the summer due to all school bands trying to get their hands on them to run rehearsals this semester.

Unfortunately, as online rehearsals cannot realistically replicate a rehearsal environment, and as members were at home unable to play their instrument without disturbing family and housemates, attendance was low. As a result, we paused the Masterclasses for this semester, instead looking towards the light at the end of the tunnel and taking this time to gear up for a return to in-person rehearsals, when PPE shipments and regulations allow.