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## The Beat Goes On Marching Band

Portland, Oregon

### Globetrotting band keeps the beat going in Europe



Zaanse Schans, The Netherlands

– photo by Jeff Ommert



Slot Zuylen, Neth.

– Ken Kane

PORTLAND, ORE. – Oregon’s marching band ambassadors, The Beat Goes On (TBGO), recently completed their first trip to Europe. The all-adult marching band’s 120 members visited several countries during a 17-day tour in late April and early May. The band marched in a pair of segments of the two-day, 24-mile *Bloemencorso Bollenstreek*, one of the world’s largest and longest flower parades, through the suburbs of Amsterdam. It also played outdoor concerts at *Slot Zuylen* castle near Utrecht in The Netherlands, and along the shore of Lake Lucerne in Switzerland.

Upon his return from Europe, TBGO President and Music Director (above, right) reflected on the trip, which was a year in the making...

#### **What was your favorite musical moment of the trip?**

Probably *Bohemian Rhapsody*, our closer at the *Slot Zuylen* show, because the band worked so hard on this tune during many rehearsals leading up to the trip. But a close second would be the “solo triangle” player we drafted out of the crowd in Lucerne. He nailed his two “dings” perfectly, then ran through the band high-fiving everyone afterward!

#### **And your overall favorite memory?**

Oh, bunches! Stepping off through cheering crowds in the daytime parade in Sassenheim. Carpets of tulips filling the fields along the parade route. Smooching my sweetie, Janet, during our *Sound of Music* tour of Salzberg in front of the *Sixteen Going on Seventeen* gazebo. Touring Paris was fun. And then there’s what happened at Restaurant Fritschi the night before our show in Lucerne. Janet and I were waiting to order dinner when she looked thoughtful and said “Is that what I think it is?” I listened harder to the music playing in the background and realized it was the Buddy Rich recording of ... *The Beat Goes On*. (Cue *Twilight Zone* music here ...)

#### **What was your impression of the audiences?**

Our audiences were terrific! We had big crowds all along the parade routes, filled with folks who were  
(more)

**THE BEAT GOES ON MARCHING BAND: More smiles per mile!**

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welcoming, enthusiastic, and ready to have a good time with us. People who lived along the route refilled our water bottles when we ran low during the parade. Many of them posted pictures and video to our Facebook page after the parade was over. At *Slot Zuylen* castle, people laughed at our dopey jokes, sang along as we played, and hung around just to talk with the band afterward. In Lucerne, a crowd of giggly teens allowed themselves to be pulled into doing a line dance with us to the Pharrell Williams song *Happy*.

**Some band members returned home after The Netherlands. Did you face challenges for the Lucerne concert a week later, with half the band was gone?**

Yes – lots of people stepped up their game to make the Lucerne concert possible. Our cowbell player schlepped a bass drum all over Europe so that she could play it in Lucerne. Our lead trumpets all went home on the early return, so two of our second trumpets warily stepped up to play lead. Our lone remaining trombonist played a solo he'd never played before.

**It took tons of preparation to pull the trip off. Are such endeavors worth the effort?**

Oh, for sure! Hey – we just got to hang out across Europe with 100 buddies, march in two sections of a 24-mile parade with amazing floral displays, play a show at an 18th century castle complete with moat, make new friends inside and outside the band, dance on the shores of Lake Lucerne, and put smiles on faces from the Netherlands to Switzerland. What's not to like?

**This was the fifth foreign trip for TBGO. (Canada twice, The Bahamas, China, and now Europe.) How did this trip compare to the band's last overseas mega-trip, to China in 2014?**

They were both great trips! Up-front planning for this trip was more involved since we had to create most of the performance and travel ourselves. (Our Chinese hosts did all the in-country planning for that trip.) The prevalence of English speakers in the countries we just visited made it easier for me to emcee our shows – it's tough to tell jokes and work a crowd through an interpreter! But the commonalities are probably more important: the warmth of the crowds, watching people light up when we fire up the band, and marveling at the way music brings people together wherever we go.

The band has taken up where it left off when it flew to Europe: with a long lineup of performances in the Pacific Northwest this spring and summer. TBGO averages about three dozen parades and concerts each year. To learn more about The Beat Goes On, go to its Website, <http://www.TBGO.org>.



Keukenhof Gardens, The Netherlands

– Jeff Ommert



Lucerne, Switzerland

– Ken Kane



Bloemencorso Bollenstreek, The Netherlands

– Jeff Ommert