

JOSH JOFFEE, NEW YORK
Developing a Love for Music

I started to play the trumpet for the Brass Band when I was 11, around 1989. Come to think of it, I don't remember ever choosing to play in the band. It was the "old days," as many of the members say, and everything was so gung ho at the time. I didn't even know how to play, but my parents still pushed me to join.

I remember my first experiences performing with the band. We were always playing "Forever Sensei," and I could barely get a sound out of my horn. Of course, it didn't matter. "Brass Band must have the fighting spirit no matter what! Hai, hai, hai!" That was the old days for you. One of the other band members figured a way for me to just play the same note over and over again in time with the rest of the band, and that was how I made my way through my first performances.

As I played with the Brass Band throughout the years it became more relaxed, but the goal of lifting the spirits of the members never wavered. In fact the group became more musical. We started playing new types of music such as salsa and reggae and always had the members dancing and singing at every meeting we played for. Through these activities I developed a love for playing and performing music and I have been receiving musical training ever since.

Within the last year the New York Brass Band had to reflect on an important issue. The usual members were getting older, and there weren't many youth coming on to replace them.

As a result we reorganized the band. We have divided the Brass Band as well as the Fife and Drum Corps into smaller, regional bands designed to get the youth in these areas to be more involved — as well as to be more in control over their performance material.

I have taken on some responsibility over the Youth Band in the Bronx and Westchester.

At 19 I am the oldest member in the band, and we have a fresh, young spirit. We have about 10 young men and women from junior high and high school.

Playing mostly Latin music, we have already performed for a lot of meetings and have continued to reach and lift the hearts of the members.

We are now focusing on the Junior High and High School Division Music Festival that will be held in August, in which all of the performing groups in New York will be participating.

Looking back I fully appreciate the experience that I have received from playing in these activities, and I am determined to apply the training I've received and the love for music I've developed through Brass Band activities toward putting on a wonderful show this August.

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