



## THE BARRIS BEAT

# *Drums And Bugles Sound On Lakefront*

*By Alex Barris*

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One evening last week, I heard the unmistakable sound of bugles in the vicinity of the lakefront and, acting on that time-honored children's custom of chasing any and all parades, I discovered 40 boys blowing and beating their hearts out on the field in front of the Toronto Harbor Commission building.

The 40 young men (or most of them) were wearing green windbreakers and I had to get fairly close to them before I could make out the lettering: "The Optimists Drum and Bugle Corps".

By this time, I had almost been run down by them. These boys don't just play - they also march around, sometimes in some manoeuvres tricky enough to look like a full-fledged army band. On

television, it would probably be called choreography, but no one would dare use so fancy a word around these fellows.

There were other spectators, a few of them also in Optimist jackets, so I asked one of them if he could fill me in on the whole business. He referred me to a man named Don Daber, who is the publicist for the Toronto Optimists Drum Corps. And was HE well armed with background information! He had a satchel full of literature.

This group, I learned, was the Optimists junior drum and bugle corps, but the service club also supports a senior group and a bantam. The boys in the junior group must be under 21. When they reach that age, if they're still interested, they move up to the seniors.

These boys turn out for practice two evenings a week and most weekends - unless they're on the road. During the summer, they appear in a number of shows, often competitions against other similar bands, from which they raise money that is turned back to the Optimist Club for its service work. (The club, of course, provides the money to keep the drum and bugle corps in existence).

Many of the boys can't read music, but some of them are schooled well enough to teach the arrangements to the others. And you should hear some of the arrangements! They aren't the trite old routines you may associate with drum and bugle corps but bright, interestingly orchestrated pieces (including, inevitably, I

suppose, "A Cockeyed Optimist" and played with enough precision and bite to make Stan Kenton's brassy outbursts seem puny by comparison.

The Optimists Juniors were practicing on this particular evening, for a trip to Rome, New York, where they were to compete against a number of U.S. corps for the Eastern State Championship. The Optimists won it in 1959, but lost it in 1960.

This Saturday, July 15, at 8 p.m. they will be at East York Stadium competing for the Canadian Junior Championship. And, if any of the other corps sound and look as good as this one, it should make for a fairly lively and entertaining program.

During the summer, they'll make other appearances: At Niagara Falls on Sunday, July 18; at Windsor on July 30; at Rochester, N.Y., on Aug. 12; at the CNE on Aug. 26; and at Waterloo and St. Catharines during September.

If you're around, have a listen. I think you'll be pleasantly surprised. I know I was.

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