

ANNOUNCING NEW SGI-USA YOUTH MUSIC GROUPS LEADERSHIP SGI-USA YOUTH DIVISION LEADER, JAMES S. HERRMANN

Since the 1960s, Youth Music Groups in America were composed of Music Corps for young men and Fife and Drum Corps for young women and had completely separate leadership. When I first started participating in SGI activities as a young men's member, my first activity group was the Music Corps (formerly called the Brass Band). The support I received and the friendships I developed in those days still remain today.

However, in various parts of the country, Youth Bands have emerged as a co-ed activity. In other words, those groups now involve both young men and women, adding a new dynamic to the SGI-USA Youth Music Groups. Since the establishment of the Jr. High School and High School Division in 1993, it has become natural for young men and women to meet together and encourage one another. Moreover, the majority of our Youth Music Groups' members today are also 18 years old and younger.

In support of this grass roots movement, a new SGI-USA Youth Music Groups leadership team and structure was recently announced to reflect these growing changes. This leadership team consists of co-leaders, a vice leader and a secretariat.

This new structure does not suggest that the groups who are now functioning separately as Music Corps and Fife and Drum Corps must combine. Rather, the Music and Fife and Drum Corps, along with Youth Bands, will now be supported by and fall under the leadership and coordination of the new SGI-USA Music Group Leaders.

It is our hope that through this new beginning we will be able to better support and nurture existing groups as well as foster many new groups across the country.

Inspiration and Hope Through Performances

SGI-USA Youth Music Groups Leader, Andy Matsuda

Since my appointment as SGI-USA Vice Music Corps leader two years ago, it has been my privilege and honor to work alongside Daisaku Leslie and Emy Mukumoto. During those two years, I have witnessed both Daisaku and Emy working tirelessly for the sake of their respective groups.

Likewise, in my new responsibility, together with Emy, Jason and Willie, I am determined to work even harder for the sake of the development of the SGI-USA Youth Music Groups. I am praying for the growth of each individual Youth Music Groups member as well as the growth of their respective groups. It is my hope that new groups will continue to develop across the nation giving hope and inspiration to every corner of our organization.

Recently, in the series *Dialogue on the Lotus Sutra*, SGI President Ikeda talks about Bodhisattva Wonderful Sound: "Through his august form and with his music, Wonderful Sound lets all present know of the incredible benefit of the Lotus Sutra. He expresses the invisible state of life he has attained in such a way that anyone can understand, in both a visible and audible form. It comes down to expression; unless we express ourselves clearly, others will not understand. Take love as but one example. If you keep your feelings to yourself, the other person will never know! It

is only by conveying to others in some way the state of life we acquire through faith that they will receive our light.” (March *Living Buddhism*, p. 33).

It is also my determination that through our performances, we can inspire this type of expression in everyone. Our pure-hearted performances will give abundant hope to those who are suffering and our lives, overflowing with joy, will encourage people to share their confidence in the Mystic Law with everyone around them. I look forward to working together with all of you to make this a reality.

New Departure for Youth Music Groups

SGI-USA Youth Music Groups Leader, Emy Mukumoto

I have been the SGI-USA Fife and Drum Corps leader since March 16, 1998. I appreciate the time I have spent working alongside Daisaku Leslie, who was the SGI-USA Music Corps leader. For more than 17 years, I have been a part of the Fife and Drum Corps and have seen many changes throughout this period of time.

This new national leadership structure is a fresh departure for the Youth Music Groups, and I am honored and proud to be a part of this team of leaders. It is my determination to challenge myself and work tirelessly for the youth members in each group comprising the Youth Music Groups, supporting them in any way I can. And I am determined to share all that I have learned with them and vow to work together with Andy, Jason and Willie.

Leaders of Kosen-rufu

SGI-USA Vice Youth Music Groups Leader, Jason Berg

Based on the power of Nam-myoho-renge-kyo, it is my greatest hope that the SGI-USA Youth Music Groups will lead the kosen-rufu movement in America. I am praying that each of us develop unshakable conviction and faith in the Mystic Law, developing a direct connection with SGI President Ikeda. In addition, I pray that each of us form bonds of indestructible trust and friendship, fighting 100 percent within the SGI, 100 percent in our jobs, 100 percent in school and 100 percent in our families.

In areas where there are no Youth Music Groups, let’s start them! In areas where these groups already exist, let’s double our participation! For the culture festivals next year, I encourage each Youth Music Groups member to bring one friend to participate with them, becoming confident in sharing this philosophy with others.

And my personal resolve is that I will not begrudge my life and that I will help realize my mentor’s dream.

Surpass Your Limits

SGI-USA Youth Music Groups Secretariat, Willie Mack

When I was first told that I would be appointed one of the SGI-USA Youth Music Groups leaders, I wasn’t very excited. Quite honestly, I was scared and did not really feel I was the right person to do it. However, I chanted and accepted this responsibility with the determination to challenge myself, not only as a leader but also to become a better person.

A friend shared with me the following guidance from SGI President Ikeda: “Never forget that other people are other people, and you are you. You mustn’t feel envious or jealous of others...Please forge a solid, unshakable self-identity. The important

thing is to always concentrate fully on the challenges at hand. If you do that, your mission will reveal itself to you naturally..." (*World Tribune*, 9/10/99, p. 6).

With this in mind, it is my determination to work together with Andy, Emy and Jason and create a SGI-USA Youth Music Groups that surpasses all others throughout the world.