

Musicians are ready to go on the road!

By JUANITA BOUSER
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Leonard Brendel is preparing to go on the road.

He and the other 26 musicians in the Western Piedmont Symphony's chamber orchestra will be presenting at least 15 concerts between now and the end of May.

They will be in Burke County Feb. 23 to play for all the fourth graders in the public schools. Students from Valdese, Rutherford College, Hildebran and George Hildebran elementary schools will attend a concert by the chamber orchestra at 9 a.m. at the Hildebran Junior High Auditorium. Two other performances at the Collett Street Recreation Center in Morganton are scheduled for 10:30 and 1 o'clock for students in the central and western parts of the county. High School a

Brendel, a band teacher with the Burke County schools for nine years, is the Valdese Junior High School band instructor and the East Burke High School stage band director and marching band assistant director. He has been the principal oboist with the Western Piedmont Symphony about five years.

Other eastern Burke County musicians that will be performing with the chamber orchestra Feb. 23 include Jim Williams (tympany), Charlotte Grill (trumpet) and Helen LeCain (cello).

Being a member of the symphony affords Brendel "the only opportunity for me to play," he says. "I didn't play at all for a year after I graduated from Carolina and I missed it." So when he was asked to fill the principal oboist position, he was glad to have the opportunity to play again.

"I enjoy working under Martin Bellar," he says. "He's a fine conductor, and teachers, especially music teachers who continue to play instruments, are better teachers (because of the orchestra experience.) I can relate better to my students by putting myself in their position once a week."

The symphony members practice once a week at the old Hickory High School band building.

Their first rehearsal for the Feb. 23 performance will be Sunday. The chamber orchestra, so named because it is made up of fewer members and can perform in a small chamber as opposed to a bigger concert hall, will perform music that is "generally a little lighter," says Brendel.

Each year at the performances for the fourth graders, music is selected around a central theme and the students are introduced to the instrument families. This year's performance will revolve around show tunes.

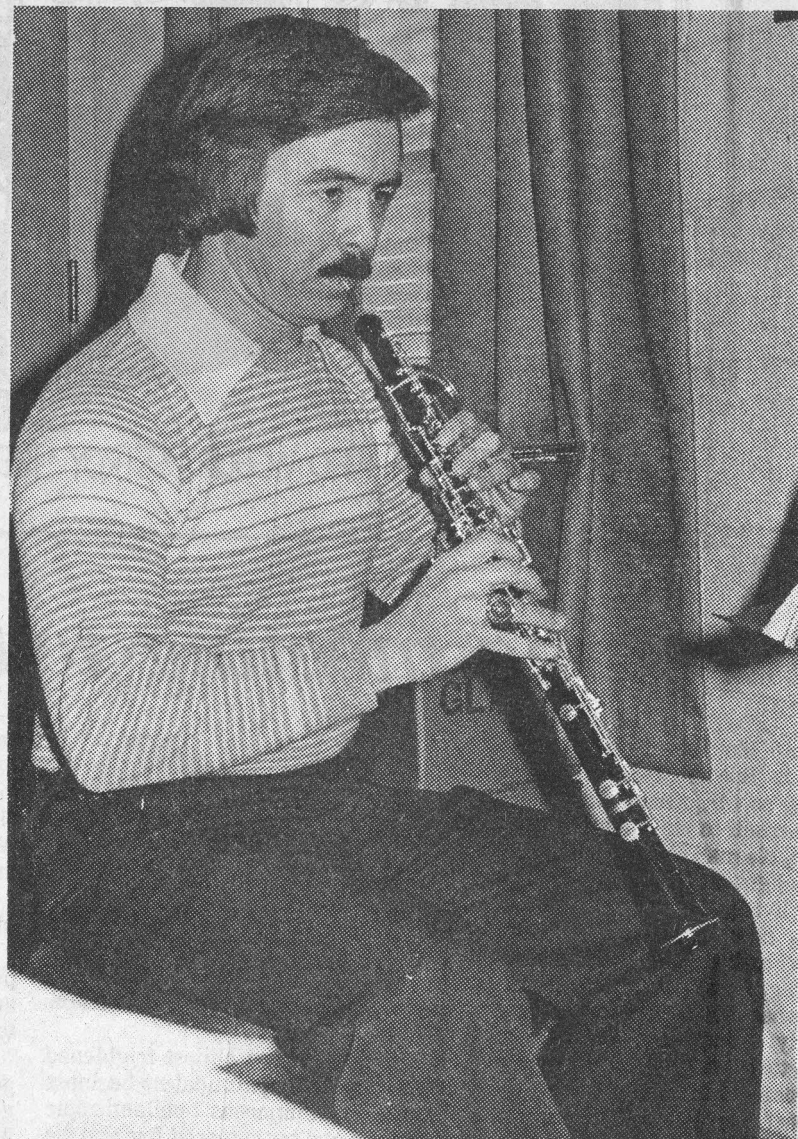
Brendel feels that these performances are important for the children. "Music surrounds us in our everyday life," he says. "We can't get away from it. It's in restaurants, department stores, our cars. I think that we are so much surrounded by it that we tend to ignore it. It's important for them to learn that it is to be enjoyed as an art and an experience in itself as opposed to some background noise.

"The quality of a person's life is improved by adding this esthetic dimension to it," he continues. "It's an important part of education. A person shouldn't be educated in just the basic subjects that will enable him to take care of his basic needs. Education should also improve the quality of his life."

Brendel notes that, after similar performances in the past, students have asked him about instruments that they haven't seen before. And it inspires some who are already interested in an instrument to work toward perfecting their technique. "It gives them a better concept of how they should sound on that instrument," he says.

The Western Piedmont Symphony is made up of people from many walks of life. "Several are band directors," Brendel says. "A lot are housewives and professional people in other areas who have participated in musical groups at some time in their lives." The symphony gives them "an outlet for this ability," he says. "Very few players are professional musicians."

While most do this as a hobby, they still "strive for perfection,"



Leonard Brendel practices the oboe ... for chamber orchestra performance

Brendel says.

The members are paid a small stipend, which "basically amounts to gasoline and car expenses to rehearsals."

Brendel is looking forward to the three performances in Burke County next Thursday. "I'd like the students

to get excited enough to tell others—their parents and friends—so that the whole program will be better supported by the people in this area," he says. "To have a symphony of this quality in a non-metropolitan area is a rare and rich resource that we ought to hang on to."