

"The Junior High School Band Concert" by David Wagoner

When our semi-conductor
Raised his baton, we sat there
Gaping at Marche Militaire,
Our mouth-opening number.
It seemed faintly familiar
(We'd rehearsed it all that winter),
But we attacked in such a blur,
No army anywhere
On its stomach or all fours
Could have squeezed through our crossfire.

I played cornet, seventh chair,
Out of seven, my embouchure
A glorified Bronx cheer
Through that three-keyed keyhole stopper
And neighborhood window-slammer
Where mildew fought for air
At every exhausted corner,
My fingering still unsure
After scaling it for a year
Except on the spit-valve lever.

Each straight-faced mother and father
Retested his moral fiber
Against our traps and slurs
And the inadvertent whickers
Paradiddled by our snares,
And when the brass bulled forth
A blare fit to horn over
Jericho two bars sooner
Than Joshua's harsh measures,
They still had the nerve to stare.

By the last lost chord, our director
Looked older and soberer.
No doubt, in his mind's ear
Some band somewhere
In some music of some Sphere
Was striking a note as pure
As the wishes of Franz Schubert,
But meanwhile here we were:
A lesson in everything minor,
Decomposing our first composer.

Kelly Gardner 9/19/10 9:48 PM

Comment: Implying that the conductor only knew a little about what he was doing.

Kelly Gardner 9/19/10 9:46 PM

Comment: To hear "Marche Militaire" click on the following link:
http://www.classicsforkids.com/music/music_view.asp?id=7

Kelly Gardner 9/19/10 9:47 PM

Comment: This was going to be the first band concert for the group.

Kelly Gardner 9/19/10 10:03 PM

Comment: A metaphor, comparing his playing to a Bronx cheer * See notes below

Kelly Gardner 9/19/10 9:56 PM

Comment: Describing the sound of his playing

Kelly Gardner 9/19/10 9:57 PM

Comment: Pointing out that even the smelliest, most dirty houses might close the windows in order to not hear his playing.

Kelly Gardner 9/19/10 9:57 PM

Comment: The only thing he did well was empty the spit valve.

Kelly Gardner 9/19/10 9:36 PM

Comment: Allusion to Joshua and the Battle of Jericho, from the Bible

Kelly Gardner 9/19/10 9:37 PM

Comment: Allusion to the famous musician Franz Schubert

Kelly Gardner 9/19/10 10:05 PM

Comment: Somewhere, a band was playing this song correctly.

Kelly Gardner 9/19/10 9:58 PM

Comment: Shaming the original composer - Schubert.

- Read more about Allusions by using the following link:
<http://www.worsleyschool.net/socialarts/allusion/page>
- The blue text shows one rhyming set of rhyming lines – a couplet.
- The song they are playing is a piece by Franz Schubert. It was an intended military marching piece, but has the sound of a lighter parade type march, rather than a harsh wartime song. In this light, how is it appropriate for this group to play this piece?
- See the definition for embouchure using the following link:
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Embouchure>
- See the definition for “Bronx Cheer” using the following link:
http://wordsmith.org/words/bronx_cheer.html