



# The Tolopka Tattler

2018 "Band to the Bone" Edition



*Each year you hope* we'll talk about something new. Nope! Once again it's all band, all the time because we are Band to the Bone. Welcome to the 2018 Tolopka Tattler.



Wowing the crowds in the Netherlands

## Continent #3 for TBGO

The Beat Goes On Marching Band had a record-setting year, performing on 51 days during 2018 including 30 parades and 30 standstill shows.<sup>1</sup> The highlight was our April trip to Europe (TBGO's third continent) for Bloemencorso Bollenstreek.<sup>2</sup> The largest parade in the world featuring tulips, hyacinths, crocuses, daffodils, and other bulb

flowers, Bloemencorso Bollenstreek runs for more than 25 miles<sup>3</sup> from town to town through the bulb-growing region around Amsterdam. Fortunately, we didn't have to march all 25+



Awaiting the start of the evening parade

miles; the parade is divided up into segments and marching units are swapped out after each segment while the floats continue onward. We performed in the parade's evening segment on

Friday night wearing our ever-so-classy purple sequined flashing fedoras<sup>4</sup>, then returned for a

4½ mile segment on Saturday. The weather was so nice on parade day that our "hydration engineers" ran out of water waaaaay early and ended up knocking on the doors of people's homes to ask if they could refill their water bottles. One resident asked if we would rather have beer!<sup>5</sup>



TBGO up close and personal!

## Tulips, canals, & art – oh my!

Naturally we found other ways to amuse ourselves in and around Amsterdam. We spent half a day at world-famous



Visiting world-famous Keukenhof Gardens

Keukenhof Gardens, and now have a lifetime supply of tulip photos. We took a boat tour through the canals, explored the 9 Little Streets with their quirky shops, checked out the Dutch Masters<sup>6</sup> at the Rijksmuseum, and took silly photos



Obligatory photo with windmill at Zaanse Schaanse

<sup>1</sup> Yes, we can still do math – some days include both a parade and a standstill.

<sup>2</sup> In case your Dutch isn't up to snuff, that's "Bulb Region Flower Parade".

<sup>3</sup> Or 46.3 farthings in metric units.

<sup>4</sup> I've recently learned that the hat is a trilby not a fedora, but "flashing fedora" is alliterative and "flashing trilby" sounds like a website you should probably avoid.

<sup>5</sup> We would. But not during the parade.

<sup>6</sup> Turns out they are *not* cigars. Who knew???



at the “I amsterdam” sign in Museum Square.  
NEWS FLASH: We just now learned that the “I  
amsterdam” letters were removed from the Square



Trying to escape in Museum Square

on  
December 3  
by city  
authorities  
since “[they]  
have  
become a  
symbol for  
mass tourism  
and the  
negative  
effects of it.”  
Go figure ....

### I-trecht, You-trecht, we all trecht for Utrecht

As we were arranging the Netherlands trip, we discovered that Utrecht is a Friendship City for Portland<sup>7</sup> and located only 50 km from our hotel. Hmm ... maybe we could arrange a friendship-ly show? We managed to snag an invitation to perform at Slot Zuylen, a castle built between the



Leading the band into Slot Zuylen

16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, complete with moat and winding castle wall. Sweet! We impressed visitors with our brio<sup>8</sup> and even saw a genuine stork nesting atop the castle chimney.



A visit from the stork

### April in Paris

After six nights in the Netherlands half the band went home, but the rest of us loaded up the bus and we moved to Beverly – I mean headed out to see what else Europe



Performance in the Slot Zuylen courtyard

has to offer. It turns out that one answer is “canola fields,” which aren’t as flashy as tulip fields but spiffy nonetheless.<sup>9</sup> First stop: Paris, with brief stops in Brussels<sup>10</sup> and Bruges along the way.



French canola field

This was our first-ever trip to Paris.<sup>11</sup> We toured the city from the Seine, admired the gargoyles at Notre Dame, boned up on impressionist art at Musée d’Orsay, enjoyed the view of the Eiffel Tower from the Trocadéro, ate in little cafés – you know, Paris stuff.

When we were planning the trip, one of our band buddies asked if we’d be interested in joining him and his wife for a ballet performance at Palais Garnier.<sup>12</sup> Sure! What’s playing? *Anne Teresa de Keersmaeker*. Um, okay.

On the appointed evening we donned our fancy duds (brought just for this purpose), settled into our seats alongside David and Lynda in over-the-top elegance, discovered that ATdeK is not the name of a ballet but rather that of a Belgian contemporary dance choreographer,<sup>13</sup> and proceeded to whip a little culture on ourselves.<sup>14</sup> The program included three early ballets by ATdeK set to music by Bartok, Beethoven, and



Brussels: Famous for more than just sprouts



Obligatory Eiffel Tower photo

<sup>7</sup> Like a Sister City, but not as cozy. It’s not you, it’s me ....

<sup>8</sup> “Enthusiastic vigor” (the steel wool pad has two L’s).

<sup>9</sup> Janet *really* liked them. We now have a lifetime supply of canola photos.

<sup>10</sup> Steve’s a fan of World’s Fairs, so he was excited that we got to stop at the Atomium from the Expo 58 in Brussels.

<sup>11</sup> It turns out there really are chestnuts in blossom.

<sup>12</sup> Better known as the Paris Opera.

<sup>13</sup> Heavy emphasis on “contemporary”.

<sup>14</sup> Fun facts: ATdeK is a baroness and in October 2011 accused Beyoncé of plagiarizing her choreography.



Schoenberg<sup>15</sup> and let's just say the style was a little different than the marching band. Afterward



Gussied up at the Paris Opera

we asked David if he's a fan of contemporary ballet. "Nope," he responded, "it was just the only game in town." Turns out it was nothing that drinks and

dessert on the way home couldn't improve.



À la Musée d'Orsay

After a night in Strasbourg and stops at Verdun (depressing) and Dachau (supremely depressing and evil), we reached Munich as our jumping-off



It's amazing what you can do with Legos ...

<sup>15</sup> Program note: "Of equal musical intensity, these three ballets interpenetrate in vibrant osmosis." I can't make this stuff up.

point for Hohenschwangau and Neuschwanstein castles. Yep, they look just like you expect.

Then on to Salzburg, where we hunted down Mozart's birthplace and the band enthusiastically sang along with the tour guide during a *Sound of Music* tour.



"We are 16 going on 17 ..." Yeah, right.

Our final stop on the Magical Mystery Tour was Lucerne, where our first mission after arrival was finding the parks department office and figuring out how to pay for our performance permit.<sup>16</sup> Our show at the Kurplatz beside Lake Lucerne drew a nice mix of tourists and locals who enthusiastically line danced to Pharrell Williams' *Happy* with the band.



Doing the Happy dance with the band at Lake Lucerne

While in Lucerne we also rode the gondolas that travel nearly 5 km to the top of Mt. Pilatus. Although we had had spectacular luck with weather throughout the trip, it deserted us for this outing.<sup>17</sup> Oh well, you can't win 'em all.

To our surprise, we learned that Lucerne is located near the Twilight Zone.

One night we went out for dinner and randomly chose Restaurant Fritschi. Nice little place, family



Atop Mt. Pilatus

<sup>16</sup> This turned out to be harder than we thought because they didn't accept credit cards (despite what they told us before we left) and we didn't have Swiss francs yet. We ended up borrowing francs from our tour guides.

<sup>17</sup> If you'd like to see our view from the gondola, cut a ping-pong ball in half and place one half over each eye. Tada!!!



run, not crowded. We ordered, settled in, and then ... hey, what's that music playing in the background? Why, that's the Buddy Rich recording of (dun-dun-duuuuun!) *The Beat Goes On*.<sup>18</sup>



Waaay too fascinated with Swiss swans

### State Your Business!

Our other major gig of 2018 was the Oregon State Fair in Salem, the first time we've been invited to perform there. We brought a band to the Fair on all 11 days, playing 2-3 mini-parades each day throughout the fairgrounds and making friends with all the vendors we passed.

dors we passed.

Since you can only eat so many corn dogs,<sup>19</sup> we had plenty of time to kill between shows. We spent a surprising amount of time watching dogs jump off platforms into swimming pools, visiting all the commercial booths,<sup>20</sup> enjoying ice cream from the Oregon Dairywomen's stall, admiring arts and crafts from around the state, and of course checking out the animals. The bunnies



Need one?

were awfully cute, but the most exciting exhibit proved to be the chickens. As we wandered among cages displaying a seemingly infinite variety of poultry, Janet leaned over one cage to get a closer look and the chicken EXPLODED!!! Not literally, but it *was* like setting off a car alarm. Nanoseconds later every other chicken in the barn had joined in. Having become *pullum non gratum*, we

slunk away to the next exhibit.

But the highlight of our Fair experience was when the Entertainment Producer asked us to help fill in dead time between acts at the L.B. Day Amphitheater on Friday and Saturday nights.

We were happy to oblige, marching into the arena and doing a spirited 15-minute show while roadies worked feverishly to reset the stage for the second act. All of which means that we've now opened for Kool & the Gang and Steppenwolf ... and the Village People and the Guess Who have opened for us!



Surprising a few folks at the Oregon State Fair

### Home is Where the Heart Is

Most of our TBGO gigs were considerably closer to home. We marched two St. Patrick's Day parades, made our 7<sup>th</sup> annual appearance on Broadway at the Portland Center for the Performing Arts,<sup>21</sup> and played a 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary concert for a couple in their backyard, joined only by their young son and a couple of neighbors.

In September we made our first appearance at the Autumn Leaf Festival in Leavenworth, Washington, a town that's turned itself into a Bavarian village as a tourist draw. Along the way, we stopped in Wenatchee for a ride aboard the 1920's-era Yakima Valley Trolleys.<sup>22</sup>

We always march Portland's Veterans Parade;



Making a splash on KIMA at the Yakima Valley Trolleys

this year we also did the Albany (Oregon) Veterans Day Parade, the largest west of the Mississippi River. As a bonus, we also provided live music for lucky<sup>23</sup> carousel riders at the beautifully restored Albany Carousel. A holiday show in Pioneer Courthouse Square finished a great 2018 season.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Nee-nee-nee-nee ... (cue Rod Serling).

<sup>19</sup> Correct number: zero.

<sup>20</sup> Our acquisitions included the world's most over-constructed hummingbird feeders and Griptics, which don't look like much but are *awesome* for closing snack bags. Buy 'em at [www.griptic.com](http://www.griptic.com).

<sup>21</sup> Our 8<sup>th</sup> appearance will be webcast live at the Portland's website on August 14, 2019. Mark your calendar!

<sup>22</sup> Of course we played. Did you really have to ask?

<sup>23</sup> At least in our opinion.

<sup>24</sup> By the way, if you'd like to help support the band at no cost to you, you can make TBGO your supported organization for both the AmazonSmile program and Fred Meyer Community Rewards. Thanks for the help!

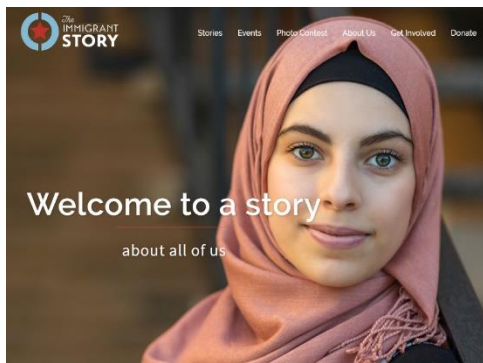
### Jazz, Rock, and Concert Music Too

Our other performing groups have less crowded but still satisfying calendars. Second Wind Jazz played concerts at a winery, a senior activities center, our annual neighborhood concert, and a first-ever gig at PCPA. The scaled-down SWJ Septet has also taken off and now has a regular dance gig every few months at a local dance club. Our Rock 'n' Roll group (Treble in River City) played at a winery, a high school alumni party, and a going-away party for one of our vocalists who was moving away.

Portland Community Wind Band performed its usual slate of concerts. The Spring concert featured *Unending Stream of Life*, a beautiful multi-movement piece with variations on *All Creatures Great and Small*. One movement had a solo requiring Janet to hit a few high notes on her alto sax and not sound like someone had pulled a cat's tail. She spent hours working on the intonation of those notes.<sup>25</sup> At the Fall concert, ensembles from the band were incorporated into the mix. Janet played *Fantasy on a Theme of Jupiter* with three of her sax buddies in the band. They worked hard on that piece and it really paid off (here's a link: [Jupiter](#)).

### Busy Hands are Happy Hands!

Because bowling, Jazzercise, book group, and half a dozen bands just weren't enough to keep her busy, Janet added a few items to her plate. She's now an elected Democratic Precinct Committee Person from our neighborhood<sup>26</sup> and spends an afternoon a week volunteering at the party office.



She is also on the Board of Directors (and Treasurer) for The Immigrant Story, a start-up non-profit that documents stories of immigrants to enhance empathy and help promote an inclusive community. With a

goal of advancing the national dialogue and dispelling myths about new Americans through strong, thoughtful narratives, it's an organization whose time has come.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> She worked on it so much that she had some of it memorized for a few months afterwards.

<sup>26</sup> Competition was fierce. We believe she needed BOTH our votes to make the cut.

### The Rest of the Story!

We closed out the year with a trip to Florida to visit family. We had a great time hangin' in Middleburg with Janet's Aunt Bobbie and cousin Kelly. We took Bobbie with us to St. Augustine to ride the trolley cars and see the holiday lights. They gave us special glasses that made the experience more fun by turning every light into a teeny-tiny snowman or reindeer!

Then off to Sanford to spend time with Steve's brother's family. While there, we met for lunch with Janet's uncle Frank and his son Frank, Jr. Janet hadn't seen her 'little' cousin since they were small children. Since Janet is 8 years older, she remembered him, but he had no recollection of her. It was fun connecting after all these years.



Mt Hood and the Sasquatch say hi!

But mostly we hung out and chilled. We caught up on our pinball (Ken has two tables) and discovered *The Orville* as a new TV show for us. We also remembered sitting on Ken's patio 10 years ago to the day when we received the phone call inviting the band to the first Obama inauguration. That phone call made us realize we were capable of anything and put us on the path to a lot of great memories ever since.

Wishing you the best for 2019!

The Beat Goes On,

Steve & Janet

<sup>27</sup> Learn more at [www.theimmigrantstory.com](http://www.theimmigrantstory.com) (and they'll be happy to accept your donations).





More tulips at Keukenhof Gardens



Awaiting the evening segment of Bloemencorso Bollenstreek



The Twilight Zone, er, Café Fritschl



Whoso pulleth this sword from this stone ...



A wall in Salzburg. We don't understand it, but isn't it great?



Cruising Lake Lucerne



Celebrating Chinese-Lichtenstein detente