

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE BAND OF FLIGHT

LINEAGE

361st Army Air Force Band activated, 24 Sep 1942
Redesignated 661st Army Band
Redesignated 661st Army Air Force Band
Redesignated 661st Air Force Band, 2 Jan 1948
Redesignated Air Force Band of Flight, 1991
Redesignated United States Air Force Band of Flight

STATIONS

Wright Patterson AFB, OH

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

EMBLEM SIGNIFICANCE

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The United States Air Force Band of Flight is one of twelve bands in the Air Force and one of two assigned to the Air Force Materiel Command.

The band's purpose is to support the global Air Force Mission in war and peace by fostering our national heritage and by providing professional musical products and services for official military, recruiting, and community relations events. Today, The Air Force Band of Flight consists of sixty active-duty musicians assigned to fulfill mission requirements in specialized performing groups. These various units include:

Concert Band is comprised of forty-five members, this is the largest single ensemble within the band. The concert band performs a diverse repertoire, which includes original band compositions and orchestral transcriptions, popular Broadway and show tunes, marches, and patriotic selections. They support the morale, welfare and recreational aspects of military life, perform for military and civilian dignitaries, and appear at civic events in support of the Air Force Materiel Command's community relations program.

Night Flight is the largest ensemble from within the concert band. This eighteen-piece jazz ensemble combines the best in traditional and contemporary big band jazz. Night Flight performs for official military ceremonies and social functions, and for community concerts and festivals throughout the Midwest. They have performed at national and international festivals and conferences with such noted jazz artists Al Vizutti, Rob McConnell, and Arturo Sandoval. Outstanding charts written and arranged by Night Flight personnel and the world's leading jazz composers provide a framework for exciting performances.

The marching/ceremonial band performs throughout the year at parades and ceremonies for both military and civilian audiences. The band provides musical support for base parades, retreat, retirement, and change-of-command ceremonies; and patriotic events at Wright-Patterson AFB and other military installations. They also appear at major regional and national events such as the Indianapolis 500 Parade and the Professional Football Hall of Fame Festival Parade. The marching/ceremonial band fills one of the most traditional roles of military musicians.

Formed from concert band personnel, Wright Brass consists of a traditional brass quintet plus a percussionist. Wright Brass personnel stay busy playing for military ceremonies on base and on concert tours throughout the Midwest. They have performed at a number of international music symposiums including the 1995 International Brassfest held in Bloomington, IN. They were also a featured group at Brass Day at the University of Evansville, IN. Wright Brass features many of its own arrangements and has developed a complete entertainment package designed to appeal to diverse audiences.

Huffman Prairie Winds Woodwind Quintet is named after the nearby historic plain where the Wright Brothers conducted many of their early aviation experiments, this is the concert band's official woodwind quintet. The Huffman Prairie Winds uses the traditional grouping of flute, clarinet, oboe, bassoon, and French horn. They provide entertainment for schools, military

functions, and community events. Huffman Prairie Winds specializes in classical music for distinctive occasions. Their flair and refinement present a perfect complement to the other performing groups within the Band of Flight.

Systems Go is a seven-member popular music group that performs for hundreds of military protocol functions, community festivals, high school and university shows annually. They play a mixture of jazz, country, rock, original, and patriotic songs to fit each occasion. They have performed with country artist, Lee Greenwood, and have appeared on the Nashville Now television program hosted by Mr. Ralph Emery.

The Kittyhawk Clarinet Quartet, a unit of The United States Air Force Band of Flight, was established early in 1997 with the lofty charter of enhancing the quality of life for the members of the Air Force. It serves as a representative of the Air Force in the seven-state region for which the Band of Flight is responsible. This versatile ensemble performs a wide variety of styles for numerous situations, from dinner music and ambient entertainment to concert performances at the international conventions.

All told, the various ensembles from within The Air Force Band of Flight travel nearly 100,000 miles to perform over 500 times each year throughout the band's assigned geographic area of Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Kentucky, West Virginia, Pennsylvania and parts of Maryland. They also supplement their live performances with recordings and media appearances, reaching audiences annually totaling in the hundreds of thousands. In recognition of their contribution to the Air Force, The Air Force Band of Flight has been awarded four Air Force Outstanding Unit Award citations (in 1965, 1973, 1987, and 1990), the Air Force Organizational Excellence Award, and numerous civilian honors including The Colonel George S. Howard Citation of Musical Excellence for Military Concert Bands presented by The John Philip Sousa Foundation.

The Air Force Band of Flight originated in 1942 to help new recruits at Patterson Field adjust to marching at the rate of 120 paces a minute. The commander of the recruits asked Paul Shartle, himself a recruit and music major in college, to organize a marching band. (Patterson Field already had a dance and show band.) Shartle convinced 28 of his fellow recruits to volunteer. They sent home for their instruments and a local music store donated some used instruments.

The band was organized as the 361st Army Air Forces Band with a table of organization for 28 members, a captain, and a warrant officer. Shartle played trumpet and served as first sergeant. Although the band formed to play marching music for drills along the flightline, it also performed for savings bond drives, Red Cross events and award presentations to companies producing products for the war effort.

The 661st Air Force Band was reorganized effective July 1, 1964, with an authorized strength of 1 officer and 44 airmen.

At the turn of the century, the 60-member Band of Flight averaged 450 performances a year for official, recruiting, and community relations events, including appearances at the Ohio bicentennial celebration, Armed Forces Day, parades and concerts for Memorial Day and Veterans

Day, and various local monument dedications. Although one of 12 Air Force bands, in 2003, the Band of Flight had the distinction of being the oldest in the service and one of only two that remained at its station of origination. It was comprised of six ensemble components that played everything from Broadway show tunes to rock-and-roll.

Air Force Order of Battle

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Sources