

Optirama – The Alpha or Omega?

By Pacific Northwest Drum Corps.com
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Every January from 1964 thru 1983 the Salem Optimist Club and the Flamingos (Argonauts) hosted a Drum & Bugle Corps contest in Salem Oregon. This show lasted all day and consisted of competitions (solo, duet, quartet, ensemble) for percussion, brass, and color guards. The pinnacle was a full corps show on a basketball court. Yes, that's right. Have you ever seen 80 - 100 kids march a show on a basketball court? It's old school, crowded, and LOUD.

There have been instances where the Salem Optirama show was the **first and last** appearance for a drum corps for that season. Let's examine a few of them.

The Thunderbirds, Seattle Washington

Their last full corps field show we have on record was in 1968. Their color guard was at Optirama in January 1969, taking first in the rifle solo. They did not field a corps for the rest of 1969.

The full corps came back with a field show in 1970, with their color guard competing at Optirama in January 1971, placing 3rd in A-Division color guard. No other corps activity that year, or ever.

The Sunsetters, Astoria Oregon

Their last full corps field show was the 1972 North West Drum Corps Association (NWDCA) Championships. Their color guard was at Optirama in January 1973 and placed first in saber solo and saber quartet. No full corps activity for the rest of 1973.

There is one instance of the Sunsetters performing in July of 1974, at the Columbia County fair in St. Helens, Washington. Other than that, no other performance data has been found.

Their uniforms did make an appearance in 1976 and 1977 as the uniforms for the "New Mustangs / The Who" from Longview, Washington.

The Percussion-Naut Patriots, Spokane Washington

In 1974 the Patriots won the NWDC, A-Class Championships and placed 21st at DCI Prelims. They were at Optirama in January 1975, but decided subsequently to cease participating in drum corps field competitions. They went on to tour the USA and the world as a non-competing drum corps from 1975 through the 1990s.

The Oregon Crusaders, Oregon City Oregon

This was generally a small corps. Founded in 1971, merged with the Imperial Cadets in 1973 to form a one-year-only corps, then reverted back to being the Oregon Crusaders in 1974. They were at the 1976 Optirama, but didn't field a corps that year for some reason. Instead, 14 Crusaders joined the Vancouver Spartans 27-miles to the north in Washington State for the 1976 season. In 1977, the Crusaders were back on the field of competition.

The Alpha or Omega?

Sending kids to Optirama was a relatively low-cost proposition. A soprano here, four guard members there; carpool, or maybe take one bus. It was the first show of the year, and the bright and exciting beginning to a new and promising drum corps season. Unfortunately, sometimes it was the end of the season as well.

Long Live Drum Corps!

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