

Alfred L. Watkins

Mr. Alfred L. Watkins is former Director of Bands at Lassiter High School in Marietta, Georgia. He served as Director of Bands at Lassiter from 1982 until his retirement from teaching in 2013. He has established a fine reputation as an adjudicator, clinician, lecturer, motivational speaker and guest conductor throughout the United States. Under his leadership, the Lassiter Band grew from its original seventy-eight members to, at one time, over 400 students. At his retirement, the band program included four symphonic bands, 250-member marching band, two jazz bands and numerous chamber ensembles. The Lassiter Flute Choir, Clarinet Choir, Trumpet Choir Trombone Choir, and Percussion Ensembles have all performed on the national level.

Mr. Watkins, a native of Jackson, Georgia, received his Bachelor of Music Education (trumpet emphasis) from Florida A & M University with honors, where he was a conducting student of Dr. William P. Foster and Dr. Julian E. White. He has done additional study at Georgia State University. Prior to his arrival at Lassiter, he served for six years as Director of Bands at Murphy High School in the Atlanta Public School System, where his bands earned consistent superior ratings in both marching and concert events. As much a teacher as he is a musician, Mr. Watkins was named “Teacher of the Year” once and has been named STAR TEACHER six times.

Under Mr. Watkins’ baton, the Lassiter Symphonic Band has acquired a fine reputation of musical excellence. Recognized for their very mature tone quality, high degree of precision and excellence in musical artistry. Since 1985, the Lassiter Band Program housed four of five fully instrumented concert bands that performed on every concert and performed annually at the GMEA District Concert Band Festival. In 1986, the Lassiter Band was the first ensemble in Georgia to take four bands to assessment in Grades VI, V, IV and III, all earning superior ratings. For the last 15 years of Watkins’ tenure, Lassiter’s top two concert bands earned Superior Ratings in Grade VI. In 1987, Mr. Watkins pioneered the concept of the Symphonic Band Camp, a three-day post marching season intensive study of symphonic literature. The camp concept has been expanded to include a middle school and jazz component and is currently being implemented by thousands of school band programs throughout the country. In 1988, the band earned the prestigious *Sudler Flag of Honor*, presented by the John Philip Sousa Foundation, and presented to outstanding concert bands in America. In 1997, the John Philip Sousa Foundation listed the Lassiter Symphonic Band in the **Historic Roll of High School Bands in America, 1920-1997**. Under his direction, the Lassiter Symphonic Band has performed at some of the finest invitational concert events in America including, the 1986, 1996 and 2011 Georgia Music Educators Association Convention, 1988 National Band Association Biennial Conference, 1989 Black Music Caucus Convention and the 1995 and 1997 Atlanta International Band and Orchestra Clinic. In 1989, and again in 1996, the Lassiter Symphonic Band performed to standing room audiences at the prestigious Mid-West International Band and Orchestra Clinic. It has also performed in band conferences on the campuses of the University of Southern Mississippi (1985), Florida State University (1987), University of Georgia (1990, 1997 and 2010), Troy State University (1990) and

the University of South Carolina (1992). In 1993, 1995, and again in 2002, Lassiter's top two symphonic bands performed as "Premiere Bands" at the Bands of America National Concert Band Festival. In 2005 and in 2011, the Lassiter Percussion Ensemble was invited to perform at the Midwest Clinic. In 2007, the percussion ensemble won the Percussive Arts Society's prestigious "call for tapes" competition and performed at The Percussive Arts Society International Convention (PASIC) in Columbus, Ohio. The percussion ensemble was also invited to perform on five occasions at the GMEA In-Service conference and three times at the Bands of America Percussion Ensemble Festival in Indianapolis, Indiana. They percussion ensemble was under the tutelage of Mike Lynch, Scott Brown and Joel Boss.

During Watkins' leadership, the Lassiter Marching Trojan Band won Sweepstakes Champion Awards in 106 of 112 contest entered, earning Best Music Awards in over 100 of those contests. The Trojan Band won the **NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP** at the 1998 and 2002 Bands of America (BOA) Grand National Championships, winning two of three captions in each event. They have also won BOA Regional (multi-state) Championships in 1995, 1997, 1998 (twice), 2001, 2002, 2005, 2007 and 2009, winning Best Musical performance in each regional. In addition to being a highly competitive marching band, Lassiter has performed for several millions of people along parade routes in America. Additionally tens of billion have seen the band perform on international television in the 1986 and 1996 Orange Bowl Parade, 1997 Citrus Bowl Parade, 1999, 2004 and 2010 Macy*s Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City, and the 1988, 2001, 2005 and 2013 Pasadena Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, California. In 1999, the Marching Trojan Band received the John Philip Sousa Foundation's *Sudler Shield*, recognizing outstanding high school marching bands in America. Coupled with earning the *Sudler Flag*, the Lassiter Band is one of only 15 high school bands in America to have every earned both the Sudler Flag and Sudler Shield Awards. In 1996 and in 1997, the Lassiter Winter Guard won **NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS** in Class A and Open Class at the Winter Guard International Championships in Dayton, Ohio.

Mr. Watkins is Co-Founder, Musical Director and Conductor of the 110-member Cobb Wind Symphony, an all-adult community band based in the Metro Atlanta area. Formed in the fall of 1999, The Cobb Wind Symphony has performed in the 2005, 2007 and 2010 Georgia Music Educators In-Service Conference, the 2004 and 2011 Midwest Clinic and the 2006 and 2008 NBA/CBDNA Southern Division Conventions. The Cobb Wind Symphony earned the prestigious *Sudler Silver Scroll Award*, which recognizes community bands that have demonstrated particularly high standards of excellence in concert activities over a period of several years, and which have played a significant and leading role in the cultural and musical environment in their respective communities. Alfred L. Watkins is one of a very few bands directors to have earned Sudler's Flag, Shield and Scroll.

Mr. Watkins is a member of Kappa Kappa Psi Honorary Band Fraternity, National Band Association, Minority Band Directors National Association, Phi Beta Mu National School Bandmaster Fraternity, Florida A& M Alumni Band Association, Music

Educators National Conference, Georgia Music Educators Association, American School Band Directors Association and the NAACP. He has received 15 *Certificates of Excellence* from the National Band Association, the *Sudler Order of Merit* from the John Philip Sousa Foundation and the Band World Magazine *Legion of Honor Award*, for significant contributions to bands and band music. In 1996, Mr. Watkins was Associate Director for the Atlanta Olympic Marching Band that performed in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies of the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta. In 2008, Mr. Watkins was received the prestigious *Turknett Leadership Character Award* from the Turknett Leadership Group, a Metro Atlanta Leadership Consultant firm. He was the first public school educator to have been nominated for this award. In 2013, Mr. Watkins was selected for the “Leader of the Band Award” in an online poll of ten thousand band directors as one of the admired band directors in America.” Motivation Speaker and Leadership Consultant, Scott Lang administered the online poll. In 2013, he was a recipient of the *Image Award* by the 100 Black Men Organization of North Atlanta and the *Flourish Award* sponsored by Kennesaw State University Schools of the Arts. He has been inducted into the Hall of Fames of Florida A&M University, Bands of America, Phi Beta Mu Georgia Bandmasters Hall of Fame and is a 2005 inductee into the prestigious American Bandmasters Association. In 2001, the \$1.5 million **Alfred L. Watkins Band Building** at Lassiter was named in his honor and also serves as the home of the Cobb Wind Symphony. He is one of the founding members and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Minority Band Directors National Association, an organization formed in the summer of 2011, whose purpose is to serve, promote, celebrate and mentor minority band directors throughout America. In 2009 and 2010, two doctoral dissertations were written centering their subject matter on his life and his work at Lassiter. They are: *Alfred Watkins and the Lassiter High School Band: A Qualitative Study* by Sue Samuels, a dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Auburn University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy Auburn, Alabama December 18, 2009 and *Alfred L. Watkins: An Historical Narrative of His Musical Life and Work with the Lassiter High School Band* by Matthew J. Thomas, a Dissertation submitted to the College of Music in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The Florida State University, School of Music, Degree Awarded: Spring Semester, 2010. In 2014, Watkins’ former students and friends commissioned composers Mark Camphouse and James Curnow to write works honoring Mr. Watkins and his career: “Second Essay for Symphonic Band” and “Lexus for Solo Trumpet, Winds and Percussion.” Also in 2014, Watkins received the “Edwin Franko Goldman Award” from the American School Band Directors Association for outstanding contribution to the advancement of school bands. He and his wife of 32 years, Rita, live in Marietta. They have two sons: Christopher, as trumpet player/bugler in the United States Army Band, “*Pershing’s Own*” in Washington, D. C. and Jonathan, a graduate of Auburn University (Finance).