

Sam has great hopes for teenage band

BY BILLY KELLY.

FOR THE PAST three months a Limerickman has spent all his free time transforming a group of young children into a most promising local band.

Mr. Sammy Benson, who runs his own false teeth repair business at Catherine Street, took over the young boys in the Boherbuoy Band and formed a junior band, just three months ago.

Already they are capable of marching through the city playing difficult marches.

Mr. Benson, who was a professional tenor saxophone player, told me that in the beginning it took about ten days to get through one march. Now the boys can master a march in one night.

Mr. Benson spends all his spare time training the junior band. He trains them Monday to Friday from 7.30 p.m. to 10.00 p.p., Saturday from 2.00 to 4.30 p.m. and Sunday from 12 noon to 1.30 p.m.

Free

Tuition is free. Mr. Benson has a good knowledge of all instruments, brass and reed. His one ambition is to see children playing music and he doesn't want anything for himself.

He has studied the piano and the organ.

He teaches 40 boys at the

moment and he has as many again on a waiting list. "There is a wealth of untapped talent in Limerick," he commented.

He wants to get the band up to a high standard and then take in newcomers. These will then be able to feed the youth band.

Many of the boys have their own instruments but generally they are really stuck for them. They have to borrow instruments from the adult band.

Nevertheless the boys are dead keen, Mr. Benson explained.

"The Boherbuoy has a great future. It is not just a band, it is an institution," he declared. "And it has done more for music in Limerick than any place, or anyone."

He told me that it was fifty years since there was such a band in the Boherbuoy as these lads will make. Some eleven-year-olds can already play solo.

But the facilities at the band room are poor and there are no suitable arrangements of music for the junior band.

Instruments are most needed by the band. Recently Mr. Benson took the band for a march

through the town to collect money for instruments. One businessman sponsored an instrument. The remainder of the collection was enough to provide a drum corps.

Quickest

The young boys are aged from nine to 15 years. Mr. Benson figures the best ages to learn are from 11 to 13. "The children are quickest at that age," he pointed out.

He said they show a tremendous interest and always turn up for practice.

"If we keep going for another few years then the American bands had better watch out on St. Patrick's Day," Mr. Benson declared.


In the summer they hope to go into the Park and Play and to have some modern music by them.

Mr. Benson's family has a tradition of music. His father and grandfather were in the Boherbuoy. Eight of his family formed a dance band, which included himself. His sister teaches the piano.

Mr. Benson asked that the organisers of the community games should call on the youth band to play for their sports. This would be good for the young lads, Mr. Benson feels, and he added: "We are not interested in fees."

All he wants is to give the children a real opportunity to learn to play instruments.

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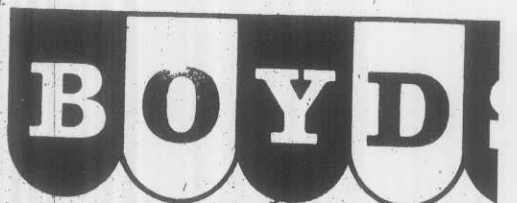
The trumpet and coronet section of the youth band.



The assembled band with Mr. Sammy Benson (left).

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