

# PORT CHESTER & RYE BROOK

38 Broad Street  
Port Chester, NY 10573

Westmore  
**NEWS**

Tel: 914-939-6864  
Fax: 914-939-6877

## Pride of Port Chester embraces fresh start

*With a new director comes completely different Latin style show*

By Sarah Wolpoff

"How can you not like Latin music," Port Chester High School Band Director Mike Miceli facetiously questioned. "It has a wide range of emotions, it's happy, it's got rhythm and you can dance to it. Everyone likes to dance, whether they'll admit it or not."

In the mid-90-degree weather on Tuesday, Aug. 28, Miceli was referring to the Pride of Port Chester's marching band field show for the 2018-19 school year: *Alma del Bailador*, or *Soul of the Dancer*.



Port Chester High School junior Stephanie Villanueva plays her mellophone while postured at the corner of fellow Pride of Port Chester marching band brass players during band camp at Crawford Park on Tuesday, Aug. 28. With a show featuring Latin dance music, this year the ensemble is changing things up.  
Sarah Wolpoff|Westmore News

The Port Chester High School Marching Band is experiencing some major changes this year. Though Miceli was the band director throughout the 2017-18 school year, this is the first field show he's directed and assembled. With him came a different instruction style, new motivations and a musical repertoire the band has never performed before.

"This year is going to see a big difference from what we had in the past," said one of the three drum majors, Savannah Langenbach, a senior. "It's going to be a good, refreshing type of show. We're learning new things and it's kind of like a new beginning for the band."

The intense performance will specifically feature Cuban songs, such as "Suerte de los Tontos," which translates to "Fortune of Fools," "Novus" by Carlos Santana and the folk song "Cumbachero." Miceli said he was drawn to Cuban songs because so much dance is inspired by the region, which is particularly known for Afro-Cuban music and salsa dancing.

Miceli said he's particularly excited about the show because everyone in the band is getting featured.

"Not only does the band get to play really cool Latin grooves in an American style marching band, but the percussion gets to do Latin percussion with congas and the drumline has these awesome beats," he explained. "It's also that the dancers will be heavily featured, too. Which is great, because I want to make sure the dancers know they're just as much a part of this as anyone else is."

Without giving away too much, Miceli continued to note there will be some surprise dance moves from the musical members of the marching band, too.

The band isn't very familiar with playing this style of music, which is why band President Ryan Heffernan described the show as being in the harder range.

"A lot of it is more difficult due to things that are more logistic in music, like different styles, articulation and technical stuff," the senior said. "It's definitely harder, but it will really help us stylistically as a band."

There were several reasons Miceli chose the Latin-themed show. As a director, he's always wanted to experiment with the style on a marching band platform. Plus, his students are obviously into it, he said, describing how they blast similar tunes in the music room at school.

Most importantly, however, Miceli likes the blending of cultures that showcasing a Latin show with a traditionally U.S. activity involves.

"I think it's a really great way to celebrate multiple cultures," he emphasized. "One of the great things about marching band is each year gives an opportunity to expose students to a new culture."

Considering last year the Pride of Port Chester exhibited a Salute to America-themed show, this performance is a total cultural shift.

In years before, they've tended to play rock n' roll music attributing a specific band, or theater-based shows featuring a collection of Broadway songs from a certain play. Alma del Bailador is more of a style theme, rather than a specific tribute, which Vice President Amanda Andreoli likes.

"It's not so much a band or play that's well known, but a type of music that's well known," the senior said. "This is something that anyone can listen to and enjoy. You don't have to know anything about it. It's very upbeat."

From Aug. 20 through Aug. 30, the band members have been pushing themselves hard at band camp to try and make Alma del Bailador their best show yet.

The 170-student family met from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. every day last week at Port Chester Middle School and worked from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. this week at Crawford Park.

While they were originally lucky with the weather, no rain and mild temperatures, the second week was brutal. With temperatures reaching the mid to upper 90s, students could easily compare their tan lines during their frequent water breaks.

"Heat can really be demotivating, it drains people out," Heffernan sighed with a chuckle. "But that's our job as seniors, leadership and section leaders—to keep people moving, motivated and wanting to do stuff. Everyone is pretty excited. We keep pushing on to be the best we can be."

Langenbach noted another element brought with Miceli's guidance is a new competitive edge. The band is going to more competitions this year to face fiercer rivalries, which she loves. The competition is making them more motivated to prove they're the best marching band around by taking home first-place trophies.

With the 2018-19 school year just around the corner, starting Wednesday, Sept. 5, the Pride of Port Chester is ambitious to start performing for the public soon after. They will debut the Latin show to the public at a home football game on Sept. 15. Their first competition will be on Sept. 22 at New Milford High School in New Jersey.

"I do want them to experience healthy, friendly competition. First place is great and we're going to go for it, but it's most important to know that we tried our best," Miceli said. "This is a really important organization to the community, and we're going to continue to carry that flag forward and show the state and country how great of a town Port Chester is through this organization."