

THE Yosemite Jazz Band

High energy, enthusiastic style of music for any event that encourages audiences to stomp their feet, clap their hands and sing along.

P R O M O K I T



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A B O U T U S

The Yosemite Jazz band was born in 1994 in the mountain communities surrounding Yosemite National Park. Berl Howell, band leader, approached reed player Ted Strauss about forming a Dixieland band. It wasn't long before the band got rolling. Immediately, the newly formed band got a gig at the local Pizza Factory restaurant and has been playing there every Thursday night since. The band quickly gained a loyal following and many other gigs ensued.

Over the years the band has seen many changes, most notably through the passing of our dear friends who once were valued and entertaining members of the band. Berl's unwavering enthusiasm and dedication to the band, however, quickly attracted new members. With recent additions of younger members such as Jeff Gurule on Banjo and Guitar, James Mierkey on Piano, and Larry Vaccaro on tuba the band is sounding the best yet. The band's repertoire includes an entertaining blend of Dixieland, early swing, gospel and other traditional jazz favorites. Yosemite Jazz Band has performed for dances, county fairs, weddings, funerals, parties, church events, and countless other functions. No matter what your function or event, an entertaining performance by the Yosemite Jazz Band is sure to please.

B A N D M E M B E R S



Berl Howell Trumpet / Vocals

Berl is the energetic leader and co-founder of the Yosemite Jazz Band. Berl began playing traditional jazz many years ago in the California coastal town of Ventura. There he performed with The Volunteer Dixieland Fire Brigade and The Untouchables Jazz Band. Shortly after moving to the Yosemite area, Berl formed the Yosemite Jazz Band and began performing in the Oakhurst Concert Band. Berl is dedicated to the enrichment of life through music, especially traditional jazz and his extremely soulful playing and good hearted enthusiasm is inspiring to both the band and the audience.



Ted Strauss Clarinet / Tenor Sax / Vocals

Ted, co-founder of Yosemite Jazz Band, has been playing clarinet nearly his entire life. In high school the sounds of the Count Basie Band caught his ear and prompted Ted to take up the tenor saxophone. He is also a gifted singer, most notable for his Louis style singing, Ted has also performed with the Bakersfield Concert Band and the Oakhurst Concert Band. Ted's energetic singing and playing contribute greatly to Yosemite Jazz Band performances.





Larry Vaccaro, aka Curly

Larry is the most recent member of the band. Despite the fact that Larry has been a trumpet player since the age of twelve, he was asked to join the band as the tuba player in 2004. Years of performance experience including performances at the U.S. Capitol Building and Disneyland aided Larry in quickly adjusting to his new musical roll. As Larry likes to put it, "I just faked it and have been faking it pretty well since." Larry continues to play the trumpet as a member of the Oakhurst Concert Band. Larry's sense of timing and humor are a welcomed edition to the band.



Jeff Gurule Banjo/Guitar/Vocals

Jeff resides in North Fork, the exact center of California, where he can almost always be heard strummin' or pickin' a banjo. Jeff feels heartfelt enthusiasm for traditional music of all kinds. He has performed in numerous bands covering Jazz, Bluegrass, Brazilian, as well as African percussion. Jeff is the kind of inspired musician who can easily jam all night and has greeted many a sunrise with a banjo around his neck.



Pat 'Chops' Mierkey Trombone/Vocals

Pat started his professional musical career at age fourteen playing trumpet and saxophone with a polka/dance band in central Wisconsin. He became a music teacher in 1965 after earning a degree in music education in Arizona. He played euphonium, trumpet and tuba with the Arizona 108th Army National Guard Band for thirteen years. He started playing tuba with the Yosemite Jazz Band in the summer of 1996 and is currently playing trombone. In addition he is the assistant conductor and trombone player for the Oakhurst Concert band.



Jim Kirin Percussion

Jim started playing drums with bands in the Chicago area many years ago. After a twenty year hiatus Jim dusted off his sticks and began performing with the Yosemite Jazz Band. On the humorous side, Jim is vicariously listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as a participant in the world's largest band. Jim has also performed at the Sacramento Jazz Festival. The Chicago jazz style Jim has brought to the band is fundamental to the band's strong sound.



James Mierkey Piano/Vocals

James began playing music and singing early in his life as a result of his parents' dedication to music. In fact, Pat Mierkey, trombone player in Yosemite Jazz Band is James' father. James began playing the drums at the age of 6 and the piano followed closely after. Within the last 10 years James has taken an extreme interest in all forms of jazz music, especially Dixieland Jazz. He has been involved in numerous musical projects both as musician and recording engineer. This will be James' third year with the Yosemite Jazz Band and his trained ear has proven indispensable.

